

# STATUS OF WOMEN IN SIKHISM



Bhupinder Kaur

**SHIROMANI GURDWARA PARBANDHAK COMMITTEE  
AMRITSAR.**

20/-

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**Namdhari Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee  
Amritsar**

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**(Bhupinder Kaur)**

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## **Introduction and Background**

The word or term ‘women’ does not need any epithetic description. Epitomically, one may describe ‘woman’ as an adult female of the human race, a wife, a mistress, a sister, a female sex. The recognition of sex has been in practice ever since the palaeolithic age. Even at the early stage also life of a Woman in the society of hunters must have been different from that of a man. Society seems to have failed to envisage ‘Her’ make of life and its expectations and almost failed to interpret her feelings, hopes, anxieties and frustrations.

Woman is an important member of a society. In fact, no society is complete without female members. Not only in human beings but also in animal kingdom females are a part and parcel for procreation and continuity of any species. In human society woman plays an important role in shaping the ethical and social values of the society, both at the individual and at family level as well as at the larger social level. Family is the cradle of civilization and woman is the pivot around which family moves. In a large number of cases, she is matrix for transmitting the values of customary morality until the individual reaches the higher stages of reflective morality.

Woman is the initiator of moral values at various levels. It is through the close contact of woman with the children that the norms and mores are imbibed by the future generations. The moral law is applicable to both woman and man in an identical manner, yet, the social laws or the values of customary morality have often shown a difference in the context or nature of their application in case of men and women. Many ethical injunctions in the earlier Western and the Indian society appeared to be discriminatory against woman.

There is considerable difference in attitude towards woman in the orient and occident. In the Eastern Culture and Philosophy, women have not been discriminated at the social and cultural levels. However, keeping in view their functions and duties and their biological structure, they have been treated differently from males. In the Western society the social, cultural and religious status attributed to women is quite different from that in Eastern societies.

In any society the status of woman invariably depends on the social traditions, norms and customs. There are some prejudices also and woman have often become the victim of many a whim and fancy the world over. However, it can be asserted that the position and status of woman in a particular society is one of the primary criteria to judge its culture and greatness.

In Greek philosophy, which had provided the foundation for western systems, the position of woman was rather pitiable. Plato held that woman is inferior to man and natural companion is man only. In this regard W. T. Stace writes about the views of Plato, "Women, he regards, are essentially inferior to men. Moreover, the modern view of woman, are the complement of man, in possessing those special virtues of woman lives, which man lacks, is quite alien to Plato<sup>1</sup>.

Aristotle was not very much different than Plato in this respect. He also considered woman as less complete, less courageous, feeble and however, made human society the world over man dominated. It was customary in Greek philosophy to treat woman as second grade citizen. She was considered more as mean of procreation, child-bearing and chores and menial jobs were perhaps considered to be their main function in the society. Aristotle holds that a woman is an unfinished man, left standing on lower step in the scale of development. Male is by nature superior and the female is an inferior. The former is the ruler and latter is the ruled. Woman is weak of will and therefore, incapable of independence of

character. Thus in the old Greek philosophy woman occupied an inferior status.

During Medieval period, Christianity had full control on philosophy, politics and religion. During this period also woman never got a place of equality in the society. Celibacy and virginity were considered to be great virtues and any violence of these was seriously viewed. The famous of Joan of Arc was burnt for blasphemy. It was hundreds of years after this incident that she was elevated to the status of sainthood. In the contemporary Western culture the position has changed a lot and woman is no longer considered to be inferior or lacking in any respect. Many international organizations and the world bodies have worked for the establishment of equality between man and woman.

Among the early Christians, it was generally believed that woman is the devil's gate and she destroys God's image in man. A Latin author remarks, "Woman is the confusion of man." Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says, "Jesus did not marry; and the whole idea of immaculate conception indicates that there is something unclean about normal sex life." Dr. Radhakrishnan adds., "Christian Europe has been brought up on the belief that death would have been unknown but for the unkindness of women. She was accused of treachery, backbiting and tempting men to their doom."

Even great poets like Shakespeare and Tennyson seem to be prejudiced against women. In Hamlet, Shakespeare says "Frailty thy name is woman<sup>2</sup>." Similarly Tennyson also says "Woman uplift for academic pursuits," and says that she is fit only for home life. "Sword is for man and the needle for the woman, and further he says that man is born to command and woman to obey those commands<sup>3</sup>."

Woman is the Alpha and Omega of the world. Auguste Comte, the father of sociology, visualised in woman the image of motherhood, daughterhood and wife. Mother is the past, wife is the present and daughter is the future. Mother gives the blessings; wife

endures it, sister captivates and daughter demures it. The negative counterparts of all her qualities result into serious hurt or destruction to the society<sup>4</sup>.

During Puritan period much stress was laid on celibacy and maintenance of very high moral virtue by the woman. In fact women were considered to be the source of allurement and hence men were warned to be careful. They were advised not to fall a prey to charms of women. However this movement faded away gradually and in the modern time, the status and equality of woman has been recognised. In the United States of America this movement gained a lot of momentum and this country became one of the first few to consider woman equal to man in all respects.

The principle that all human beings should enjoy equal rights and respect is not new to American culture. What is novel is an awareness of ways in which that principle has been violated with respect to woman in the habits and institutions of our society. As these habits and institutional patterns are challenged, there are women and men who are offended for they both have adopted to old forms and tailored their personal satisfactions and their moral codes to the maintenance of these forms. If a double standard in sexual morality violates the equality of woman with man, it should be challenged<sup>5</sup>.

In Indian society, the place and role of woman has been much more submissiv than in any other society. She has been considered a more emotional, generous, sympathetic and impulsive than her counterpart, the man. Even figures in 1970 presented a description that woman is less dominant because that is what society requires of her; more emotional because her thoughts and education have been directed to the heart rather than head; more conservative because heart and home do not change much and do not require the capacity for change as a condition of social survival.

The status of woman has been looked upon high or low, respectable or disrespective, approved or disapproved according

to the prevalent social norms in the Indian society. It began with the patriarchal dominant form of society, man, the male counterpart erected high and concrete walls of social customs, traditions, mores and norms around the status of women. The expectations from her as a submissive wife, a patient mother, a generous sister and a loyal mistress accounts for her conservative behaviour. Man constituted and governed the rules, woman submitted and accepted them for her own survival and for the survival of her home and family. So, the types of woman that our society has produced in the past, the roles they have played or failed to play, sprang from the dedications and expectations of man and the society which he be commanded with inequitable laws and enforced by oppressive measures.

The early periods of Indian history are somewhat marked with the degeneration of the social position of woman. Although in certain stages this deterioration is much more rapid, yet, the status of woman did not deteriorate at any specific point of time.

Let us now examine the status and position of woman in Eastern cultures and religions. In Hinduism, there have been different periods displaying different attitude towards woman. During the Vedic period, woman occupied a dignified place in the society. No other earlier scripture of the world appears to bestow upon the woman such equality with man as the vedas. According to vedas all high avenues of learning appear to be wide open to women<sup>6</sup>.

The Vedic woman being grown up and educated had a voice in the selection of her husband. There were some love-marriages. Elopement and even rape was considered to be a kind of marriage and widow remarriage was also taken in a good taste<sup>7</sup>. During the time of Atharveda position of woman was equal to that of man in family affairs<sup>8</sup>.

During Upnishadic period there appears to be relative downfall in the position of woman. The birth of girl was considered to be the cause of all sufferings and hardships. Their right to choose a

bridegroom for themselves was badly curtailed. The religious position of a woman too underwent a big change during this period and the privileges accorded to them were also curtailed to great extent<sup>9</sup>.

During the epic period, Puranas became popular. Women were deprived of their former Vedic privileges. Female child marriage became the order of the day. The basic right to education was also taken away from them. The husbands were unsuitable and even then they were cosidered superior. Sati system came into practice<sup>10</sup>.

In Smriti period women were regarded as means of recreation and pleasure. Manu wanted the names of woman to be good to pronounce. Sweet, simple and pleasant and to have long vowels in the end. In the *Dharam Shastra*, Manu states, "Woman should never-surveillance of her father, as a wife of her husband and a widow of her son<sup>11</sup>." Manu, a great scholar of his time, repeatedly stated, "Woman is a morally low creature. It is the nature of women to seduce men in this world, for that reason the wise are never in the company of the female<sup>12</sup>." Other thinkers had the opinion that women are the root cause of evils and nothing is more sinful and ignoble than woman<sup>13</sup>.

Traditional Hindu Culture and religions was male-dominated. Women were denied property right also. Many traditions and customs like Dev Dasi, Sati, Nagar Vadhu, were in vogue. These greatly hampered the ethical status and positon of woman in the society.

In Budhism the positons was no better. The saints were against the entry of the woman is the *Sangh*. It is said that the founder had predicted if the women avoided domestic life and became ascetic then that religion could not live for a long time<sup>14</sup>.

The relatively inferior position of woman in Buddhist era is clear from the status of nuns. For example, a nun, though hundred years old, must stand in reverence before a monk even if he has been just intitiated in the church<sup>15</sup>.

In Jainism there is some faith and respect for woman as a mother. However, education of women was limited to certain high families. They were permitted to join religion and were also skilled in politics and administration. In spite of all this, woman was by and large, castigated of her sex. The home was perhaps considered to be the important place for woman. As a result of all this, woman was generally looked down upon<sup>16</sup>.

Budhism and Jainism originated and thrived in India. Naturally the traditions and norms prevailing around them, had their impact. Living under the larger umbrella of Hinduism, these traditions also imbibed some of the restrictive norms in this respect. As far as the social life is concerned, woman was accorded some respect and honour but a woman was not considered to be a fit case for *Mokhsa* or *Nirvana*. In family life she was considered a means of carrying on domestic chores and producing children.

In Muslim religion woman has to be in veils. She must remain veiled or hidden from the sight of man. However, divorce was allowed and marriage was made a legal contract besides a marital union<sup>17</sup>.

*Sunnat* system was against the emancipation of woman hood and she was unable to get equal rights. There was lack of female education. Women was not allowed to enter the mosques in the presence of men. No woman was allowed to become an *imam* and was not able to get any other religious post. In Arabian countries a woman was cosidered to be a property of her father and her husband. In Islam, a young girl cannot marry without the permission of her guardian. Woman was generally maltreated and given no equality with man in Islam. The seclusion of Muslim woman made public education difficult for them. They were prohibited to attend *Madrassas* or Mosque schools.

In Sikhism, the role, status and position of woman is quite different from that of other religions. In fact, Sikhism is a forward looking and dynamic religion because it aimed at removing the

blind traditions and dogmas. It tried to reform the evil practices and superstitions rampant in the social life of Indians in those days. Dorothy Field, writing about Sikhism, remarks, "The most notable social improvement was the emancipation of women. Many women found salvation through Guru's teachings<sup>18</sup>."

"Guru Nanak pleaded for full rights to women. He denounced the so-called leaders of society for attributing a lower social status to woman. An orderly and disciplined society without woman is impossible to attain, he was of the opinion. Sikhism preached the equality of human kind. It rejected caste system and came down heavily on the evil and malicious practice of burning a widow on the pyre along with her husband. Naturally, this religion initiated a great struggle against inequality and all other crimes meted out against woman. Guru Nanak, through his teachings and discourses, vindicated the status and position of woman. She began to take part in *Keertan* (devotional singing) and missionary activities. These changes effected woman within the family and later on these changes altered her social relation considerably. The old values began to break<sup>19</sup>.

A sea-change took place in the position of woman. When educational facilities were thrown open to them . It heralded a new era of tremendous social change. When educated women became mothers, it cast a profound and indelible effect on their children.

After Guru Nanak Sahib, the other Gurus further carried the important work of elevating the status of women in Indian society. Moreover, due to the impact of Guru's teachings, the society began to see and realize the worth of woman. Woman began to receive respect and honour she deserved. Guru Arjan Sahib felt that there could be no hope for the social and political regeneration of our people, as long as women did not take interest in the overall development of society. This society must work for the uplift of the so-called low-castes, down trodden people and women. Guru Gobind Singh Sahib further espoused the cause of women and

assigned a higher role to them. The women were associated with social, the religious and the political struggle as well. Mata Gurjri, Mata Sahib Kaur, Sunder Kaur, and Mai Bhag Kaur took part in political activities and contributed a lot<sup>20</sup>.

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## **Social And Political Status of Woman in Sikh Ethics**

The position and the rank of a woman in every society reflects the true image as well as the cultural and spiritual level of that society. Certain obnoxious and orthodox norms of the society give a fatal blow to the development of woman. Almost all religious and social institutions relegate second grade position to woman and put the issue of their development on the back bushes.

"The Position of woman in the society has not been always the same and while at times she has been accorded a very high status, there are also historical and spiritual instances when, under some influence, she has been relegated to an inferior position!."

In the early Vedic society, which is regarded as a fairly advanced society in the annals of the ancient world, woman occupied a quite dignified place. In the family the wife was regarded as the incharge of the household. She was styled as *ardhanghani* and *Sahdhamni*. No religious ceremony could be consummated without her active participation. There was no *pardha* system. Woman had considerable liberty in the choice of her marriage partners. She moved about freely to take part in feasts and festivities. Widow remarriage was prevalent and permissible. Women were not debarred from acquiring education and spiritual knowledge.

The Rigveda contains the names and compositions of some highly educated and spiritually enlightened women such as Afsala, Vishwara, Ghosha, Lopmurdra and Nivavari who had attained the rank of rishis.

Manu, the law giver of the Hindu, has elaborately discussed the structure and function of different components of the Hindu society.

He held that there are four Varnas, Brahman, Kashatriya, Vaish, Sudras, having specific duties and functions. Similarly, he classified the human span of life into four ashramas, namely: Brahmacharya, Gharisth, Vanprasth and Sanyasa. During these four stages a person was required to follow certain injunctions and carry on certain activities. Manu's idea of society was male chauvinistic and all that is good and great was attributed to males. On the contrary, all that is bad and obnoxious was assigned to females. In the scheme of ashramas, woman, along with sudras, is not taken into account as far as the management of life through the ashramas stages is concerned. According to him, woman must be kept in subordination to the males of the family; in the childhood to the father, in youth to the husband and in old age to the son. She has no rights. During the post-Vedic period literacy among woman was rare. Going to the Patshala (school) was disputed. As. A. S. Atelkar says, "It is within the memory of us that orthodox Hindu society regarded it not only unbecoming but also unauspicious for a woman to be able to read and write<sup>2</sup>."

It becomes clear from the above passage that Manu the Hindu law, giver, was badly against women and his thoughts and ideas hampered the pristine glory of women which (women) they had attained during the Vedic period. Further on during the puranic and epic period this process of denigration of woman went on D. P. Mukerjee observes, "The Hindu woman religiously is a *Sudra*, and is not entitled to recite *gayatri Mantra*"<sup>3</sup>. In orthodox Hindu society, a woman is not supposed to go side by side with her husband. She must remain a few paces behind him. If she touches an idol; its divinity is destroyed. The Padma Purana declares, "Be a husband aged, inferior, deformed, debauched, offensive, a drunkard, a gambler, a frequenter of places of ill repute, living in open sin with women, and destitute of honour, still a wife should regard him as a god"<sup>4</sup>. A woman was cursed throughout even in the great epic. *Mahabharata*, wise men were advised to keep away

from the contaminating and filthy company of a woman. In the *Anusasan-purva*, we are told that, Yudhishtira requested his wise grand-father Bhishma to enlighten him regarding the nature of women (*Strinam Svabhavam*). He hold that woman was the fountain head evils, again Shri prabhu<sup>5</sup> adds, "A woman in her monthly course is regarded 'Untouchable'<sup>6</sup>.

During the Puranic period, the position of a woman touched its nadir and she was declared a vile creature. In Purana, it is said, that there are three kinds of wines but the most intoxicating is woman; there are seven kinds of poisons but most venomous is woman.

The social position of woman was thus at its lowest ebb. In politics the role of woman was quite insignificant. There were rare and stray cases of women enjoining social and political status. These were exceptional cases. By and large, a woman was looked down upon and possessed no respect or role in the socio-political nexus of society. The history and evolution of the position of the woman, from the Vedic to the epic period, appeared to be a retrogressive step. In the modern times leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Ray took initiative for vindication of the status of women.

Next we come to the status of woman in society according to Sikhism. The Sikh Gurus did not advocate renunciation and asceticism. So all the members of society including women were eligible for perfection and salvation. The old concept of woman being a seducer or tempter was rejected. The ideal of considering the life of the householder as superior led to the restoration of the moral and spiritual equality in Sikhism. This resulted in a decent and equal status for woman. Guru Nanak Sahib vehemently protested against assigning an inferior rank to a woman. Before Guru Nanak, there were many social religious ills were prevailing in the medieval Indian society. Imorality, corruption, hypocrisy false hood, casteism had already made strong inroads in the medieval Indian society and these evils had badly threatened the status of women. Such were the conditions when Guru Nanak Sahib appeared on the stage of history

as Messiah bringing with him a panacea for the socio-religious ills afflicting society. He launched a crusade against all these pernicious evils. The condition of women could not escape his human and kindly attention. His heart ached on observeing the miserable plight of women who, he believed, play a remarkably significant and sacred role in moulding the lives of men<sup>8</sup>.

During the period of the Sikh Gurus the role of Sikh women was confined largely to the religious social fields very often a woman happened to be intimately connected with a Sikh Guru in the capacity of a sister, wife, daughter and fell under the spiritual spell of the great personality. Then she would not only lead her life strictly in accordance with the teachings of the spiritual preceptor but also evince devotion towards him. Such truely devoted woman consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, contributed towards the progress of the Sikh movement. Even before the birth Sikhism a celebrated woman had begun to play pious role, though unconsciously, towards the cause of the mission. This woman was no other than Nanaki, the elder sister of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. She was the first admirer of Guru Nanak's spiritual greatness and gave him much needed encouragement to tread the great path that he had chosen. Dr. Fauja Singh writes, "The sister from the very begining had great attachment with her brother and was probably the first to discover the promise of future greatness in him. She is reverently remembered by the Sikhs as Bebe Nanaki<sup>9</sup>."

Bebe Nanaki was fully convinced that Nanak was destined to achieve great things in the world. Nanak received encouragment from his sister and accomplished the task of being one of the greatest religious leaders of the world.

Bebe Nanaki was loved by her parents, brother and husband for her noble qualities. She is remembered in Sikh history with great reverence.

In *Āsa di Vār*, Guru Nanak Sahib has showered a great praise on woman. Assuming all human beings of the world as woman, he

treats God as a Lord. The whole of the poetry of Guru Nanak Sahib is replete with woman's experiencing her feelings for her Beloved (God).

"The Lord cometh not into the home and I am sighing to death" and the lighting flashed and terrifies me. My bed is lovely and I am really in pain O Mother, death is here without My Lord. O Where is sleep for me," I cannot suffer enemy clothes Nanak, Blessed is the Bride Who Mergeth in the being of her Lord<sup>10</sup>."

Guru Nanak not only worked for the betterment and uplift of women but also added a spiritual dimension to their personality. He was of the firm opinion that woman must be respected and cared for. It is because of the upbringing by the woman that the personality of the offspring is shaped. It is just as the proverb goes, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." The whole world and its population ultimately depends upon woman. It is God alone who is unborn. Guru Nanak says in the *Āsa Di Vār*:

"From the woman is the woman, without the woman there is none" Nanak; without the woman is the one true Lord alone." The fortunate and gracious, pearl-like, mouth that utters the Lord's praise." It's luminescent, Nanak and it sparkless in the True Court<sup>11</sup>."

Guru Nanak recounts innumerable good qualities of woman; she possesses love, obedience, self sacrifice, grace, tenderness, refinement etc. She knows how to conduct herself.

To quote a scholar, "A man is trained by women, she is essentially the trainer of mankind. Fine arts, specially dance, music are better learned by woman than man. Woman is in no way inferior to man, she is the birth-giver to all. She brings forth kings and warriors to the world<sup>12</sup>."

*"So Kio Manda akhiyai jit jamahi rajān"*

Guru Nanak says, "From the woman is our birth; in the woman's womb are we shaped. The women is our friend and from

woman is the family. If the woman are the bonds of the world, why call woman evil who gives birth to kings ? From the woman is the woman, without the woman there is none<sup>13</sup>."

Guru Nanak Sahib worked for down-trodden and underdogs of the society. He raised his voice against the atrocities meted out to women. Dr. Fauja Singh says, "Guru Nanak idealized the love of a wife for her husband and held it up as an example for a devotee of God. By doing so, the Guru greatly exalted the status of women. Here is only one out of the numerous examples<sup>14</sup>."

The nomination of Guru Angad Sahib as the successor of the first master was an event of far-reaching significance in the evolution of Sikhism. It ensured the perpetuation of the movement on proper lines under proper leadership. The second Guru, who is believed to have embodied the spirit of the great predecessor, applied his energy and efforts towards the consolidation of the infant movement. In this task he got valuable assistance from his devoted wife.

Mata Khivi was such a devoted lady that the followers of the Guru's creed held Mata Khivi in very high esteem. In *Ramkali-di-Var*, Balwand had devoted one full *pauri* in praise of Mata Khivi. He says :

*"Balwand Khivi Nek Jan, Jis Bauhti caho partali,  
Langer daulat vandiga, Ras Amrit khir ghiyali, Gur  
Sikhan ke mukh ujle, Manmukh theyai parali"*<sup>14</sup>.

She distributed in her free kitchen-rice bolied nectar tasting like abbrosia, the faces of Guru's Sikhs were bright, those of the perverse grew pale<sup>15</sup>.

Mata Khivi was like a shady tree to Guru's disciples and afforded them affectual shade. Imbued with the social sevice and inspired by a keen sense of religious duty, she took upon herself the onerous responsibility of the management of offerings and the *langer*. She did her job in a skillful and selfless manner and evoked spontaneous respect among the disciples. Dr. Narang writes, "The Guru taught the Sikhs the first lesson of contributing money

towards a common fund<sup>16</sup>."

Mata Khivi gave her consent to Guru Angad Sahib when the question of appointment of next successor arose. She said to Guru Angad to appoint the deserving person, and se be not the least partial to their own sons.

Similarly, Guru Angad's daughter Bebe Amro inherited the noble traits and spiritual learnings of her parents. Thus the process of elevation of woman in the socio-religious milieu of the society was carried on further without any hitch.

Bebe Amro had to come in this world to unite the two great souls of Guru Angad Sahib and (Guru) Amar Das Sahib. Latif writes, "Guru Amar Das Sahib was successful as a teacher and his zeal and activity in preaching, combined with his genial habits and affable disposition, secured for him many converts to the new faith<sup>17</sup>."

The third Master Guru Amar Das Sahib strictly followed the path laid down by Guru Nanak Sahib and assigned a respectable place to woman. It is significant to note that the Sikh Guru's had admitted women into *sangat* without any restriction or reservation. They had the same message for man and woman. Thus, women were able to play a very important role in various walks of life in consonance with the general nature of the sikh movement. Guru Amar Das Sahib denounced the practices of *Sati* and *Purdah*. His daughter Bebe Bhani, who was deeply religious from her very childhood, grew up into an embodiment of devotion and humility. After her marriage with Bhai Jetha (later on Guru Ram Das Sahib), both the husband and the wife vied with each other in rendering the greatest possible service and devotion to Guru Amar Das Sahib. He was so much impressed with the unique devotion of the couple that he appointed Bhai Jetha as his successor.

A picture of devotion and humility Bebe Bhani was the dutiful daughter of Guru Amar Das Sahib who earned a very high opinion of her for her selfless services and deep devotion. Professor Puran

Singh states, "She is one of the brightest among the heroic Sikh women who played their part in history<sup>18</sup>." Macauliffe Writes "Bebe Bhani from her earliest years was fond of prayer and seclusion<sup>19</sup>."

The message left by the first master was carried down with a great zeal and a vigour by his successors. Guru Arjan Sahib proved to be equally worthy and the movement made mighty strides. Bebe Bhani the mother of Guru Arjun Sahib inculcated such high spirits in his son that he became first in the annals of Sikh history to wear the crown of martyrdom.

Khazan Singh Writes, "Guru Arjan Sahib martyrdom inflamed the peaceful sikh hearts. It set the ball rolling and generated the spirit which later on converted the ordinary 'hair-cutters and water drawers' into the greatest soldiers and generals of the time<sup>20</sup>." The other contribution was towards the establishment of city of Ram Das Pura (afterwards Amritsar) which became the most sacred place of Sikhs. Thus through the triple role of daughter, wife and mother, Bebe Bhani rendered a great service to the cause of sikh movement. The martyrdom of Guru Arjan Sahib proved to be a turning point in the history of Sikhism. The movement thereafter assumed a changed character, transforming the Sikh disciples into saint-soldiers. The recourse to arms for defence in Sikhism started from the time of Guru Hargobind, although it developed fully during the time of the tenth Guru. The revelation of Khalsa infused a new spirit among the Sikhs. Both men and women were initiated (Amrit) through immortalizing nectar by the Guru. Extra-ordinary courage and chivalry was infused into all hearts. These qualities became the part of the Sikhs life. In these trying days, the Sikh women did not lack behind. They inspired their husbands and sons to fight heroically against the enemy. The most conspicuous among these among these women are Mata Gujri and Mai Bhago.

Mai Bhago is another cynosure among the female-heroes of Sikh history. Mai Bhago lived in the time of Guru Gobind Singh,

the tenth master. Guru Gobind Singh's nector (Amrit) and his spiritual teachings infused valour and courage into all hearts. The process was not confined to men. The Guru had lifted women also to a position of equality with the men. Women also part took of the Guru's immortalising nector (initiation) and a spirit of heroism was infused into them too which filled the deep recesses of their hearts, every nerve and sinew of their bodies<sup>21</sup>.

A silently devoted disciple of Guru Gobind Singh, Mai Bhago possessed uncommon courage, valour and spirit of which she gave ample proof at one of the most crucial times in Sikh history.

When some Sikhs from Majha argued with the tenth master and signed a *bedawa* or disclaimer-disowning him as their Guru. Mai Bhago spirit revolted against the irreligious conduct of these Sikhs. She protested vigorously against their conduct. She told the deserters tauntingly that they should put on bangles and sit at home after their unmanly behaviour. These taunts made the deserters feel ashamed. They resolved to approach the master for forgiveness and do or die under his command. In the battle of Khidrana all these Sikhs fought valiantly and died as martyrs to-become *muktas* or immortal beings. Mai Bhago also fought heroically along with them. She set a great example for woman and proved that Sikh woman did not lack behind whether it is home or battle filed.

Mata Gujri was no less a woman in this regard. She was the mother of Guru Gobind Singh. She watched the brave resistance offered by the Sikhs during the course of protracted seige of Anandpur by large Mughal forces. When the Sikhs were caught in dire straits due to utter lack of supplies, she sagaciously advised the evacuation of the fort.

Thus in the political field also, sikh woman played very important role. In the confusion that followed she got separated alongwith two grand-sons, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh from the main body of the Sikh soliders. When the two young ones were betrayed into the hands of the Mughal Governor of Sirhind and

bricked up alive mercilessly she too was tortured to death<sup>22</sup>.

Mata Sahib kaur and Mata Sunder Kaur, the wives of Guru Gobind Singh are the most widely respected women. They have deep impact on the socio political history of the Sikh. Mata Sahib Kaur is popularly known as "Mother of the Khalsa" a living picture of humility and devotion. She contributed her symbolic share at the time of the revelation of the Khalsa. It is said that when the *Khanda Ki Pahul* was in the process of being prepared by the genius of Guru Gobind Singh, she poured some *Patasas* sweet crystals or sugerplum into it, thereby adding womanly sweetness to manly courage and fearlessness intended to be infused into the khalsa.

Mata Sunder Kaur was one of the second wives of the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh. Mata Sunder Kaur alongwith Sahib Kaur separated from the rest of the family stayed at Delhi. After some time the two ladies returned to Talwandi Sabo to be with Guru Gobind Singh who had settled down at there for a period. After the Guru's death at Nander, in South India, she resided at Delhi<sup>23</sup>.

Mata Sunder Kaur played a very prominent role after the martyrdom of Banda Singh Bahadur. She assumed the leadership of the Sikh community at that critical time, intervened effectively to settle the dispute between the *Tat Khalsa* and the *Bandai* Sikhs and deputed Bhai Mani Singh to take charge of the Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar. The Sikh woman could play a very prominent role in the political field because of the liberal teachings of Sikh Gurus. They had emancipated woman from the traditonal fetters and accorded to them complete equality with men in all walks of life.

Sikh women in the eighteen century played an effective role in politics, administration and in the battlefields. They acted as able regents to minor rulers, efficient administrators of the estates of their deceased husbands, and helped as warriors, politicians and advisor to the ruling chiefs. The Patiala House specially produced a large number of women of courage, wisdom and activity. The notable among them are Mai Fato (Fateh Kaur). Bebe Pardhan,

Bebe Rajinder, Rani Hukman, Rani Khem Kaur, Rani Sahib Kaur, Mai Deso, Rani Raj Kaur, Rani Fateh Kaur and Sahib Kaur particularly noted for their generosity and diplomatic skill. Raja Ala Singh owed to Fateh Kaur her a great deal in his political rise and the foundation of the Patiala States.

Fateh Kaur proved to be a woman of sterling ability and helped her husband in political affairs. She was a devoted wife who stood by husband through thick and thin. Kirpal Singh Writes "Just as Napolean had been benefitted by his marriage with Jaspine, similarly Ala Singh substantially had been benfitted by his marriage with Fateh Kaur<sup>24</sup>."

Bebe Pardhan a daughter by Fateh kaur and Maharaja Ala Singh was married to Mohar Singh Randhawa of village Ramdas (District Amritsar). Later on she could not put up with her husband who had brought a second wife and retired to her parental village Barnala<sup>25</sup>. After her arrival at Barnala, Pardhan devoted herself to religious pursuits and spent her time in meditation.

She did not take interest in politics except once and that was against Nanu Mal. Nanu Mal was a very arrogant person and his powers appeared to grow dangerously. She joined Rani Khem Kaur, Soman Singh in arresting Nanu Mal.

Bebe Rajinder Kaur is another remarkable lady who played a prominent role in Sikh history. She was the grand daughter of Maharaja Ala Singh. Bebe Rajinder Kaur was a lady of amazing courage and intellect. When Maharaja Ala Singh was arrested by Ahmed Shah Durrani on account of his arrears in tribute and was being taken to Lahore in the royal train (1765), Rajinder Kaur approached Ahmed Shah and offered to deposit the money to secure release of Ala Singh. Bibi Rajinder Kaur marched with three thousand followers through the territory of the chiefs who had fought on the side of Hari Singh, harrying and pillaging, till she arrived at Patiala<sup>26</sup>.

On another occasion she saved Patiala from a great danger,

Nanu Mal had been impriosned by Rani Khem Kaur and her party. His imprisonment at that time proved inimical to the security and peace of the Patiala state. She hepled Maharaja Amar Singh, got relaeased Diwan Nanu Mal and reinstated him in his place as minister and thus saved Patiala.

Lepal Griffin writes, "Rani Rajinder Kaur was one of the most remarkable women of her age. She possessed all the virtues which men pretend are their own, courage, perseverance and sagacity without any mixture of weakness which men attribute to women<sup>27</sup>.

After Bebe Rajinder Kaur, the young Diwan Nanun Mal was appointed the Prime Minister, through the influence of Rani Hukam. No better choice could have been made. The sister of Sardar Ala Singh of Bhika, Bebe Khem Kaur had her relations in great power in Patiala. She was power-thirsty and indulged in many games to achieve her objectivs. Mai Deso of Nabha was the wife of the chief of Nabha, Hamir Singh. Rani Deso was selected on account of her capacity for business. She maintained herself as Regent, ruling in the name of her son till 1790 when she died suddenly. Mai Desan acted as regent to the minor Sardar Maha Singh, father of Ranjit Singh. She was the daughter of the Gujranwala chief Sardar Amir Singh and was married to Charat Singh. She rebuilt the fort of Gujranwala which had been razed to the ground by Ahmand Shah Durani. Rani Raj Kaur conducted the affairs of the Sukkarchakia till her great son Ranjit Singh came of age and assumed responsibilities. After the death of her husband Mahan Singh, she acted as Ranjit Singh's regent.

The beginning of the nineteenth century witnessd the panorama of the powerful sovereign Sikh state in the Punjab under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This brought about many significant changes in the Sikh society such as reappearance of Hindu influence, revival of the practice of *Sati*, and decay of moral and social standards of life among the upper classes. The practice of *sati* which had been discouraged by the Sikh Gurus, crept in

again. But in spite of all these changes women continued to play an effective role in Sikh politics.

The political involvement of Sikh woman, in all affairs of life, is based on the principles of ethical equality of woman in Sikhism. We give here only a few examples to illustrate their role. Rani Aas Kaur was the daughter of Sardar Gurdas Singh Chattha. She was married to, Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala. She was shrewd and an ambitious lady. Griffin writes, "She was a woman of great ability and conducted administration of the Patiala State, during part of her husband's reign and during the minority of her son<sup>28</sup>." She plunged herself very actively into politics and power during her husband's reign. Her ambitious nature did not spare her Sister-in-law Sahib Kaur, whose ambition was cut out to size primarily by her efforts.

Daya Kaur was the wife of Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh of Nishan Walia Misl. After the death of her husband, in 1786, she assumed the control of her estate. Daya Kaur held the estate till 1823, when it was lapsed to the British because she had no son to succeed her. Griffin writes, "She was an excellent ruler, and her estate was one of the best managed in the 'protected' territory<sup>29</sup>. After the death of her husband she managed the estate of Bilaspur with great responsibility. In the same way, Sardarni Ram Kaur and Raj Kaur the widows of Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh, the founder of Kalsia family, on the death of Bhagel Singh, the son of his friend and an associate of Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh was acknowledged as the head of Karorsinghia Misl in 1788 through Ram Kaur and Raj Kaur, held Chiloundi for many years and on their death, the estate lapsed to the British Government.

Rani Sada Kaur the head of the Kanaiya Misl and Maharaja Ranjit Singh's mother-in-law was also one of the greatest women of her times. Sada Kaur was a very shrewd. Harbans Singh writes, "She was a woman of uncommon courage and intelligence<sup>30</sup>." She rendered considerable help to Ranjit Singh in the development of his power. It was with her valuable assistance that Ranjit Singh

became the master of Lahore.

Mai Sukhan was the widow of the Bhangi chief Gulab Singh of Amritsar, who had taken part in the battle of Bhasin against Ranjit Singh. Gurdit Singh was looked after by Mai Sukhan who also looked after the affairs of the State. Bebe Chand Kaur after the death of her husband Fateh singh, along with his mother and another widow, Ratan Kaur, acceded to the throne, which fell entirely into her possession in 1844 and was held by her independently until her death. Mai Sahib Kaur of Jind, the wife of Raja Fateh Singh acted as the Regent of her son, the minor ruler. She increased the treasures of the estate to a great extent. Bibi Harsharan Kaur disguised and passed through innumerable dangers to inform about Hari Singh Nalwa's death to Maharaja's Ranjit Singh.

Raj Kaur or Mai Nakkain, as she is also known by the second name, was one of the bravest women in Sikh history. She was married to Ranjit Singh. Rani Chand Kaur was an ambitious woman who wanted to possess an influential position after the death of her husband Maharaja Kharak Singh and her son Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh. Rani Chand Kaur claimed to rule on behalf of her prospective grand child. Rani Chand Kaur was a woman possessing self-confidence and great courage. It is evident from her reply to the objections against the war-like Sikh men being ruled by a woman. She is said to have stated, "England is ruled by a queen; why should it be a disgrace to the Punjab to be governed by a Rani." She was a very energetic and courageous woman.

Rani Jind Kaur or Jindan sometimes known as "The messalina of Punjab<sup>32</sup>," was the famous woman of the punjab who saw the final downfall of the Sikh kingdom. Rani Jind Kaur was the daughter of Manna Singh, a trooper in Ranjit Singh's service.

Even after the middle of 19th century Sikh women continued to play an important part in the affairs of the Sikh nation. In the Kuka and Gurdwara reform movement and later, in the freedom struggle of the country, Sikh women played a laudable role. Inder Kaur and

Khem Kaur were active members of the Kuka band of warriors who attacked the capital town of the Malerkotla State in 1872. Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, daughters of Raja Sir Harnam Singh of Kapurthala Amar Kaur of Gurdaspur and Harnam Kaur, wife of Hira Singh Bhathal played conspicuous role in several national campaigns. Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur took an active part in salt campaign launched by Gandhi and was arrested in Bombay. Later, she pooh-poohed the Communal Award of 1932 and was again imprisoned. During the Quit India movement of 1942 she led many processions, one of which was subjected to a ruthless lathi-charge in Simla, Bebe Amar Kaur of Gurdaspur hoisted the national flag in the local jail, on October 9, 1942 and was jailed for 16 months. The third, Bebe Harnam Kaur courted arrest along with her husband and children. Earlier in the Jallianwala Bagh firing of 1919, some brave Sikh ladies such as Bebe Har Kaur of Lopoke, Mrs. Basso of Sultanwind and Lachchman Kaur had fallen martyrs. Equally conspicuous is their role in the various morchas for the Punjabi Suba the linguistic state of Punjabi Speaking people. During 1955 and 1950 and 1960 *morchas* and later in *Dharam-yudh morcha* during 1982-84 thousands of Sikh women courted arrest. After attack on and occupation of Darbar Sahib Amritsar by the Indian army. Dr Rajinder Kaur, the daughter of the great Akali leader Master Tara Singh, began agitation for freedom of the Sikh shrines from the Indian army. General Sikh women embraced martyrdom during the Sikh agitations even post-1947 period.

In 1996, 30 seats were reserved for Sikh women in the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). Bibi Kiranjot Kaur became the first executive member of the SGPC in 1996. On March 16, 1999 Bibi Jagir Kaur became the first President of the SGPC.

It has been observed that ethical equality of woman is an essential characteristic of Sikhism. The great achievements of the Sikh women in various walks of life were possible because of freedom, respect and equality given to the Sikh women. Before

Guru Nanak Sahib their conditions was deplorable To quote Prof. Sher Singh "The condition of woman was not much better than that of the unhappy *Shudra*. The very fact that God had created them as women deprived them of entering into heaven or attaining any salvation. They must be born as men to get release from the transmigration of souls<sup>33</sup>.

Although Kabir and Tulsi Das were great Saints yet they did not speak very high of woman. Kabir considered woman as a source of lust and passions. She has to be kept at an arm's length. Tulsi Das equated her with *Shudra*, as he thought that constant reprimand is necessary to keep woman under control<sup>34</sup>.

The position in Sikhism, however is totally different. The Sikh Gurus laid down the norms of the ethical equality of woman with man. This teaching has greatly influenced the society in the post-Guru period. Woman enjoys respect freedom and equality. It is Sikhism which has granted exalted status to women.

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*"Dhol, Ganwar, Shudra, Pashu Nari  
Ye Sab Taran ke Adhikari."*

## **Sikh Injunctions** **Female Infanticide, Sati (Bride-burning)**

The problem of ethical equality among women has to be studied in juxtaposition to the various problems faced by women. It has been generally observed that woman have been considered inferior in most of the human societies. The very fact that women have been fighting for their rights and emancipation throws light on the dismal conditons women-folk have been subjected to. It pre-supposes the fact that certain privileges are being denied to them by this male-dominated society. Many world organisations, including U. N. O., have been working tirelessly for the up-lift of women for the last several years, bear an eloquent testimony to the fact that women are even denied their basic and fundamental rights.

In the Sikh ethics a constant endeavour is made to safegurad the interests of women and give them equal status with men. Presently we are concerned with three main problems of women namely female infanticide, *Sati* system and Bride burning.

### *(a) Female Infanticide*

Infanticide is the murder of a new born child committed by the parents, or with their consent, a practise that stands apart, both as its origin and its association, from the killing of another man's child, which is simple murder. In some cultures parents are allowed to decide whether the new born child shall be reared, or not. If this decision is positive, they will not thereafter, under normal circumstances, kill it.

Infanticide was practised even in the ancient period and it is clear from the remarks of L. T. Hobehouse, "They hold human life sacred with exception, common among savages that they allow

**infanticide<sup>1</sup>.**

Judging from its practice in many areas during many periods of history, infanticide is probably ancient. Destruction of human progeny appears to have been widely prevalent in the form of infanticide, abatement or contraceptive measures, etc. Infanticide is the most primitive since parental destruction involves anatomical and physiological knowledge. Even during the Roman period this practice was followed. Hobehouse points out, "This history starts with the early Roman family, organized as it was under the highly developed patronage as of the father. All the children are the father's, and in law he can dispose off them at pleasure. He can chastise them, sell them into slavery, and even put them to death<sup>2</sup>."

The practice of infanticide was common in different parts of the ancient world. It was popular among some American aboriginal inhabitants. Infanticide seems to have been practised to a considerable extent among the Eskimos of various regions. These include many Athapascan, Algonquian and Iroquoian peoples, numerous tribes of the pacific coast region from Alaska to California, many of the barbarous and semi-civilized tribes of Mexico, Central America, and Northern South America, and a large number of South American uncivilized tribes, such as the Potagioans peoples, the Salivas campas etc. In Germany the primitive German father had the power of life and death over the children<sup>3</sup>.

Although infanticide was practised by many societies yet its most common form was female infanticide. This has been followed by many 'societies' and is still prevalent in many countries and societies. In this regard Dr. Avtar Singh says, "The practice of female infanticide is an unethical practice which is said to have been carried on in the past, in many countries besides India. It is traced to various causes. But, whatever is the cause the moral horror over it will remain undisputed<sup>4</sup>."

**In India and China, female infanticide was a widely used**

practice. There was a custom of giving dowries in these countries, Moreover, the parents of the daughter had to remain in perpetual subjugation to the in-laws of the girls'. The matter did not end with marriage only. There were many festivals and ceremonies in which the girls parents had to give away gifts. Whenever any child is born to the daughter, the parents had to make a substantial contribution towards the expenses and also give gifts to the husband and the other members of his family. In fact, even at the time of the death of the woman the funeral expenses had to be borne by the parents of daughter. This explains the treatment which was meted out to the parents of a daughter. All these things were responsible for annihilating a female child during infancy. This also led to the preference given to the male child<sup>5</sup>.

The tradition of female infanticide continued for a long time in India and is still being practiced in some area and communities. Mostly this practice was followed in northern India. In Punjab also the female infant was put into a water pitcher and buried in the ground. Following couplet was recited as she laid down.

*Gur khaen puni katen aap na aaven bhayaan ghalen<sup>6</sup>.*

(Eat suggar, spin your collen, do not come send brothers instead.)

Before the Sikh Gurus influence began to assert itself in opposition to the cruel custom, the fate of the new-born child lay entirely in the hands of the astrologes. If the latter declared that the day of birth was unpropitious, or that the child had been born under sinister auspices, it was got rid of at once. Even in the 19th century, in spite of every check imposed by the British Government, the practice to some extent still persisted.

(There can be many causes for female infanticide. A scholar suggests that "In Rome, Arabia, Greece, India and China women of the upper classes, relieved by the males of the harder tasks, as an effort to keep them young and as a sign of rank, became an economic

burden and consequently infanticide fell mainly on the females.") He also holds that "The necessity of finding a dowry for daughters contributed to the selection of female children for infanticide in China and India." "Secondly the cause is also traced to the ancestor cults of Greece, Rome, India and China could be transmitted only through the males and this also resulted in the destruction of girl infants<sup>7</sup>." The first contention in terms of economic causes is also supported from a study of the Australian aborigines. The study reports that where women are indispensable for the food supply, there, no discrimination in infanticide is made between sexes<sup>8</sup>. An Indian historian also cites the difficulty of marrying off a girl as another reason for this practice<sup>9</sup>. The third cause for this practice, in respect to India, is attributed by R. Fict. to the injunctions of ancient scriptures<sup>10</sup>.

However a deep study of the Hindu scriptures reveals that the contentions of R. Fict are not based on sound arguments. In fact the female child was not liked by some Hindu social groups and hence a step-motherly treatment was accorded to female children. There was no encouragement or directive to kill the female child as pointed out by the scholar "We may say that it is wrong to maintain, as Fick does, that scriptures commanded or supported female infanticide. The line *expose a new born female child but not male* may mean that they simply put aside a daughter on her birth without any rejoicing or any *jat karma*, that is the celebrations which were usually performed at the birth of son<sup>11</sup>.

During the Medieval period there were constant wars in India; there were several attacks by hordes of people from central Asia and Afghanistan; they plundered the cities and committed arson, looted and raped women away. In such circumstances the safety, and honour of women was at stake. The martial community and some other higher castes and classes thought it better to kill the female infants instead of allowing the tyrants to outrage the modesty of

their daughters. This practice was specially followed by the Rajputs. Tod writes that Rajputs were often heard to exclaim "Accursed the day when a woman-child was born to me<sup>12</sup>."

The Sikh ethics accords right to life to everyone regardless of the sex of the person. The woman same right to life that a man has. Female infanticide is strictly prohibited in Sikhism. The practice of female infanticide was considered to be a culpable crime and was taken in a bad taste in Sikhism, and this obnoxious practice was vehemently condemned by Sikh Gurus. In this regard Macauliff says, "The Sikh Gurus resolutely set themselves against this practice. At the time of administration of the *pahul* one of the obligations imposed on neophytes is not to kill their daughters, and to avoid all association with those who do<sup>13</sup>."

Since there is perfect equality among men and women in Sikhism, so both have equal and fundamental rights to live them. If men enjoys certain privileges, women have also a fundamental right to do so. In fact man's life is not complete without a woman. Sikh Gurus asserted that women as well as men equally shared the Grace of God and were responsible for their deeds before him.

This shows that Sikh Gurus were deadly against any discriminating treatment against woman. The question of female infanticide, therefore, does not rise in Sikhism.

The society was infested with hydra-headed problems when Sikhism came on the scene. The dark clouds of blind faith, superstitions and dogmas had badly engulfed the society. Guru Nanak fought against these orthodox and traditional beliefs, including female infanticide. "Imparatives are found in Sikhism against the entertainment of any superstition or the consultation of astrologers or sooth-sayers<sup>15</sup>," requiring further that "female infanticide should not be practised and social relation with persons indulging in it should not be maintained<sup>16</sup>." Persons indulging in it are to be excommunicated from Sikhism and those having any social relations

with them are termed punishable<sup>17</sup>. According to yet another compiler "He who is a Sikh and deals with one indulging in female infanticide would be led to disaster ultimately<sup>18</sup>. In another formulary it said, "Sikhs should not entertain even in mind the relationship with those indulging in female infanticide<sup>19</sup>.

It will be observed that the ethical judgement in Sikhism over this evil is very severe and broad based Sikhism is not ready to accept the causes which are attributed to infanticide as enumerated above.

Although the Sikh Gurus did not enjoy the powers to put a permanent ban female infanticide and translate it unlawful, yet they Guru Sahib whole-heartdy set themselves against this evil practice. They recommended the excommunication of a person who indulged in this malicious practice or tried to build up any relation with the perpetrator of such crime<sup>20</sup>.

### *Sati*

Another evil practice that had made the life of a woman miserable was the practice of *sati*.

The practice of *sati* is very old. It emanates from the belief that woman has no independent existence away from man. She can not enjoy equality with men. Being inferior she has no right to live according to her own wishes and desires. At all times she has to live in subjugation. In this reagrd the following observations are very remarkable, "In childhood female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her Lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent<sup>21</sup>."

The meaning of the word *sati* lies in the verbal root 'Sat' meaning what is real, true good or virtuous.

Schrades states that Indo-Germanic ordained that the wife should die with her husband and this custom he ascribes to the desire to provide the deceased with what was dear to him during life as well as 'to make the life of the house father safe on all sides, and

to render to him an object of perpetual care and anxiety to his family.

There is an interesting statement by Frazer regarding sati. He says that in the Atharveda the suicide of the widow on the death of her husband is said to be 'her ancient duty; but, although she ascended the funeral pyre and lay by the side of her husband, she is said to have as her reward 'Progeny and Property'. Here, as in the Rigveda, the widow is made to rise up from the funeral pyre and is led away by a new husband<sup>22</sup>."

The ancient custom and ancient duty of the widow to burn herself on her husband's pyre had, therefore, given birth to the idea of second marriage in Vedic India but in later times this ancient custom was revived under the influence of Brahmins as they were anxious to obtain command over the property of the widow.

Romesh Chander Dutt referred to *sati* as a barbarous custom and as the most cruel of all human institutions<sup>23</sup>."

"The custom of sati has been outlawed, but the spirit of still dominates the womanly heart of the Hindu wife<sup>24</sup>.

Sati was a custom instituted by man, enforced by religious rewards and penalties, with a view to reveal the woman as a sheer object of her husband. She glorified that custom and often transmuted it into most sublime, exhibition of wifely devotion.

The custom of *Sati* exists in certain other countries and societies also. There was a custom that the death of a king or a chief was followed by immolation, "either voluntary or forcible, by his wives, concubines, attendants and servants so that they might keep company with their deceased Lord and serve him in the same way as they served him on earth<sup>25</sup>."

In the ancient period, this evil practice of *sati* was sometimes enjoined on by some authorities. Some historical examples, where wives burnt themselves alive on the funeralpyre of their husbands, bear an eloquence testimony to the fact that practice of *sati* was

mainly confined to the women of royal families. According to the Arab writer Sulaiman, wives of kings sometimes burnt themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands, but it was for them to excercise their option in the matter. The actual occurence of this grim rite is testified to by a few historical examples of queens and other ladies of high families thus sacrificing their lives. But the custom was still mainly confined to royal families and had not yet spread among the masses, is hardly supported by a passage in 'Kultanimatam' which recognises it as one of the general virtues of a wife<sup>26</sup>."

Sometime the widow burnt herself willingly but very often she was forced to die on the funeral pyre of her husband by the greedy and conventionl, relatives. Some of the widows who showed reluctance to become *Sati*, were either drowned or they had to spend their days in utter misery. They were regarded as untouchables and were ostracised. Naturally, these women had to give to the whims of orthodox peoples.

In India towards the close of the ancient period, some scriptures were quoted to back the self-immolation of a widow. It was propagated that such an act will expiate the sins of three generations of her husband's family both on his father and mother's side. This kind of hope and encouragement was given to *sati*. There have been stray cases of sati in other countries also. The Greek writers have mentioned such a case that occurred in the fourth century.

In Hinduism, the Rigveda too encouraged and glorified *Sati*, "On ! Let these women, not to be widowed. Good wives, adorned with callyrium, holding clarified butter, consign themselves to the fire. Immoral, not childless, nor husbandless, well adorned with gems, let them pass into fire whose original element is water<sup>26</sup>."

According to the Paurancia Mantra, "Om ! Let these faithful wives pure, beautiful, commit themselves to the fire, with their husband's corpse<sup>27</sup>."

The vicious system continued well into our time in spite of the Bengal *sati* Regulation of 1829. Mrs. Indirabi Madhav Udgaounkar, sister of Dr. A. S. Altekar, decided to *Sati* (immolated) herself within twenty four hours of her husband's death, on 17th January 1946, as she considered it her sacred duty<sup>28</sup>. And this gruesome incident bears a testimony to the fact that the government founded miserably to contain the practice of *sati*.

It may be relevant to add here that in the laws of Manu, widows are treated as low. We find the provision here that "A virtuous wife who after the death of her husband constantly remains chaste reaches heaven, though she may have no son..."<sup>28</sup>.

Thus the law of Manu give the possibility to woman living after the death of her husband. In the same way, it is laid down in the laws of Manu that "At her pleasure let her emancipate her body by (living on) pure flowers, roots and fruit, but she must never mention the name of another man after her husband has died"<sup>29</sup>.

"I consider all women to be alike, who knoweth which shall be dear to the Bridegroom ?" Saith Kabir, "the husband, forsaking all other women shall meet her on, whose forehead such lot hath been writtern<sup>30</sup>."

It was believed that widows who immolated themselves on their husbands' pyres obtained salvation.

The practice of *sati* was prevalent at the time of the emergence of Sikhism. The reference of the *Sati*, is available in Guru Granth Sahib but it has not been mentioned in codes of the Sikhism. But in one 'Rahitnama, we find one reference to "*Sati* as a custom rejected in Sikhism<sup>31</sup>."

The practice of *sati* was denounced by Guru Amar Das Sahib. He defined the true '*Sati*' as, "not those who burn themselves with their husband's corpses, rather those who die as a result of the shock of separation from their Lord. They also are known as satis who abide in modesty and contentment"<sup>32</sup>."

According to Guru Amar Das Sahib, co-cremation of widow is inadmissible. The women are burnt in the fire with their husbands. If they appreciate their husbands they undergo sufficient pain by their death. Nanak if they did not appreciate their husbands, why should they be burnt ? Whether the husband be alive or dead such women will feel far away from him<sup>33</sup>."

In other words, what he meant to say was whether a widow loves her deceased husband or not, her cremation is useless. If she loves him, his death is a torture to her, while if she does not love, his life or death has no meaning to her. Therefore, cremating her by force, or for the sake of custom or fashion is utterly useless<sup>34</sup>.

Guru Amar Das Sahib, who is known to have introduced several social reforms in the sixteenth Century, reviled a woman, who was insincere to her husband, in these words,

"Woman becometh not pure even though she dons many ornaments If she careth not for her husband but loveth another" Nanak, such a woman is impure, ill-conducted and evil among her sons<sup>35</sup>"

Guru Amar Das Sahib preached widow-remarriage, he condemned the *Purdah* system and said, "The woman who discards all the veils and fetters of slavery and walks on the path of spiritualism boldly gains her objective of right behaviour; the holy woman believes that God alone is the universal husband. And that all the souls of the world are His wives."

Guru Amar Das Sahib further said that, *dhan Pir ih an akhie behan ekatha hoe, ek jot doe murti dhan pir kahiyai soe.*

(True wife and husband are not those who simply live together but those who are united in spirit as well)<sup>36</sup>."

Bhagat Kabir rejected the practice of *sati* in the following words.

"The Bride gazes at the pathway.  
Singing and with tearful eyes.

Her heart is satiated not, and with firm steps  
(she standeth) longing for the sight of her Lord<sup>37</sup>.

What a hero is he who dreads the face to face engagement and what kind of faithful wife is she, who, when call comes, starts assembling utensils<sup>38</sup>.

In this respect Guru Arjan Sahib states that :

In the Kali-age they (the man and woman)  
meet as was ordained.

And as was the will, they enjoy themselves.

But she attaineth not to her loved Lord by  
burning (on his pyre).

And by becoming a *sati* through the effect of the wrought deeds, sheepishly, she follows the habit of the mind and surrenders herself to fire. But she attains not the union of the Lord and wanders through many births. She now hath self-control and pious conduct and submits herself to her beloved's will,

Such a woman cometh not to grief at the Yama's hands (3)

Sayeth Nanak, "She who looks upon the Supreme God as spouse,

Blessed is such a *sati*, Yea, approved is she at the Lord's Court<sup>39</sup>."

The view is expressed by Sikh Guru that to be known as virtuous, the housewife's social conduct ought to be in terms with ethical and social values, and not in terms of self-immolation.

### ***Bride-Burning***

Bride burning has been very much in the news in the recent past and has shocked the sensibility of the general public. But bride-burning is merely the extreme form of a much more socially accepted women-wife inequality and cruelty, physical torture, and beating. Social values and virtues of a woman are generally disregarded in the society. An important social value is the "equality of both sexes," but its acceptance is sometimes eclipsed in actual

practice.

In India, these days, there has been an alarming increase in the number of cases in which married women have been beaten, tortured and burnt to death. These deaths have generally come to be associated with dowry. Here, a set of values which regulate the behaviour of an individual member does not seem to consider the value of a woman as a whole but only material values attached with her transfer of social relationship through marriage are viewed, in isolation.

Many questions need to be answered about the alarming increase in incidents and suicide of newly married women. "On an average two young go up in smoke every day<sup>1</sup>."

The Sikh Gurus emphasised that the wealth should be earned righteously and through honest-labour. They condemned the practice of dowry, as they were of the view that wealth earned through dowry was unethical and unjustified.

The case of bride-burning, due to dowry, shows the evil conduct of the human beings and betrays the unequal consideration between the female and male in the society. But in Sikh ethics, there are injunctions for absolute equality between the so-called low and high, weak and mighty. In this way Guru Arjun Sahib says. "The wise of the god looks upon all alike. Like the wind that blows is alike for the commoner and the king<sup>2</sup>." Bhai Gurdas similarly proclaims the ideal 'Equality of a king and commoner<sup>3</sup>'.

The Gurus also appear to presume that the notion of superiority of classes may arise when one forgets that one's life is rather short and death would level the so-called superiority of the classes. A moral person according to the Gurus, is one who treats all in terms of equality<sup>4</sup>.

In Sikhism, however, more widespread and practical steps are advised to be taken for the socio-religious equality of woman. Sikhism vehemently condemned the practice of bride-bearing and

stood for the socio-religious equality of women. Various moral codes and injunctions were enacted to condemn bride-burning. These codes and injunctions strongly forbade the practice of burning a bride for the sake of dowry. The idea of bride-burning was stoutly condemned by Guru Arjun Sahib, and he laid emphasis on hard earned livelihood.

Those who believed more in their own material welfare amassed wealth and exploited others, were termed as the evil *Manmukhs* by the Gurus. The Guru knew that a society dominated by *Manmukhs* would lead to a socio-religious and cultural degradation, and economic anarchy; Therefore, they had a word of caution for them<sup>5</sup>. A *Gurmukh*, according to Guru is, "one who does good unto others".

In this regard, bride burning is the worst state of evil or cruelty towards woman and those who committed these atrocities on women were termed as *Manmukh*. A compiler has said "In this category are included those persons who always return evil for any act of good done to them." For repeated good, they repeatedly return evil"<sup>6</sup>.

A *Gurmukh* has to control his lust, passion, greed, avarice and anger. If a man leads a virtuous life, sins will keep away from his life. Sins and virtues cannot exist together in his conduct. To live a pious life, we have to renounce the vices. In the words of Guru Arjun Sahib:

"When I please five virtues, I displease five sins. When I put the former into my heart, I dispossess the latter."

Only such a person can find comforts in life who does not attach too much importance to wealth, but rather shares it with others. According to Sikh tenets, If a man hankers after wealth, amasses it through foul means, beats up his wife for dowry, can not find comfort in life. Lamenting the declining character of such a man, Guru Nanak Sahib says in a hymn,

"One Coveteth another's woman and riches and is afflicted with the evil of I-am-ness. Give up thy evil and slanderous nature, omen, and low born lust and wrath. In thy mansion liveth in the infinite and unfathomable<sup>8</sup>."

According to the Guru in order to be known as virtuous, women ought to maintain family's knit by love. The virtues of a house wife are to be in terms of her role in the family<sup>9</sup> and not in terms of what she brings from their parents. Thus, apart from expressing religious and moral disapproval of bride burning practical measure such as, the option of widow remarriage, was also taken to ensure a complete eradication of this moral evil.

In this regard, in Sikh Gurus strongly pooh-poohed a greedy person who is interested in his own material welfare, amasses wealth, and exploites others.

The Gurus have repeatedly emphasized the role of honest means of livelihood for a balanced and a orderly society. They have described the recourse to corrupt, *immoral*, and unjust economic activites, Any material exploitation is therefore condmend by them as unjust as well as immoral.

According to Sikh ethics, a virtuous man lives happily, and cooperatively on the basis of equality with others. He ought to surrender his self to the larger self of the society. Looked at from this aspect that trilateral theory can be found reflected in the following words :

**"Kirat Karo, Nam Japo, Vand Chhako."**

It is the first part of this line which is pregnant with the idea of production. *Kirat* means, honest work., Thus the Guru has emphasized the honesty of human efforts to earn his livelihood<sup>11</sup>.

It was through truthful life that the Gurus tried to modify the economic behaviour of man. That is why the emphasis was on hard, honest work. Guru Nanak has said :

**"He alone, O Nanak, knows the way who earns with sweat of**

his brow and then shares it with others." In the above lines the words "Sweet of brow." is the translation of the word "*Ghal*" used in this context<sup>12</sup>.

What does the word *Ghal* mean. The word has been explained by Bhai Gurdas<sup>13</sup>. He has emphasized the idea that out put or effect will result from sincere efforts put in while at work. *Ghal*, as explained by Bhai Gurdas, stands for hard work. At another place, Bhai Gurdas has used similar words.

'Earning the hard endevaour'<sup>14</sup>.'

At another place, the Guru has said "It is better to live by honest labour than by begging". Dowry-seeking is linked to mendicancy. Honest earning is the key-note of Sikh ethics.

The second component of the honest economic life is "not to live by begging." This means one must live and earn by himself, whatever the activity be, and not depend on others.

The third component of this theory is that one ought not to exploit others in the process of production. The Gurus were emphatic on this issue and warned their followers, against ill-gotten wealth which corrupts the man. They say "The Guru will acknowledge those (as disciple) who do not subsist on ill-gotten wealth<sup>17</sup>."

As to the social relations of the greedy persons Guru Arjan Sahib says, "O Loh (greed), Thou hast swayed even the best of man by thy waves. And men's minds waves and wobbles and runs in all conceivable directions, together more and more, thou hast respect neither for friendship, nor ideal nor father, nor mother, nor kindreds. Thou makes one to do what one must not do, and to eat what is eaten not, and to build what cannot be built<sup>18</sup>." Guru Nanak says "The greedy mind is never at place and out-goeth in all directions<sup>19</sup>" Guru Arjan Sahib points out that for the greedy, riches become the mainstay of life<sup>20</sup>. Guru Amar Dass Sahib says that a person is not trust who is greedy worthy. The greedy is not loyal to

anything else except his own riches, for which, he would deceive every one and every one in the end<sup>21</sup>.

This shows that the recognition of *Lobh* as a spring of action is not something unique to the Sikh ethics but it is distinguished by its greater emphasis on the social aspect. It is stressed that *Lobh* may motivate disregard for social loyalties and responsibilities. It is, therefore, termed as an evil act<sup>22</sup>.

There are various references in Sikhism to mental insatiation, deceitfulness and untrustworthiness generated by *Lobh*.

Further says Guru that "If your mind is bent on collecting wealth by whatever means, foul or evil, it is to the earth you must return again and again and lose the real object of life<sup>23</sup>."

"Who makes wealth his object

Loses the real object of life."

The Sikh ethics makes it clear that the object of life is not the collection of wealth through foul methods, but to serve others and to live honestly. Those who amass wealth through trickery, cheating, and other corrupt ways including dowry from wife's parents have been scolded by the Guru in the following words:

He is blind, Who earns blindly

Has no eye (discriminative power) in heart<sup>24</sup>.

The Gurus did not favour amassing material wealth, because amassing such wealth without honest working, is not in consonance with ethical codes. Guru Arjan Sahib has said, "Man is not satisfied with vast wealth. It is not sufficient for him to see many phases of life. He desires to acquire more and more. Accursed the bodies, accursed the wealth of lovers of mammon<sup>25</sup>.

According to the Guru's teachings, hankering after wealth results in misery to both the collector and the deprived. Guru has said that "On account of this wealth many were destroyed. Many were in miserable plight<sup>26</sup>.

**The Gurus were against the misappropriation of others' wealth.**

The virutes, according to the Gurus, may be learnt and cultivated through communication with the virtues. Guru Nanak Sahib says, "In the society of the holy, one becomes, holy, and one runs after virtues, forsaking sins<sup>27</sup>."

There is no doubt that some Sikh women have also been, burnt by their in-laws<sup>28</sup>. Here, the question arises why does these incidents occur ? The Sikh Gurus have unequivocally rejected all attempts to foist inequality and economic as well as social exploitation of all the members of the society. The women were accorded a very high and respectable place in the family and in the society affair. Thus, it can be logically concluded that Sikhism worked or lot for the emancipation of females. All the evil practices like sati, child and female infanticide, bride burning etc were strongly opposed by Sikh Gurus. Guru Nanak says, "None is born low, Every one is noble. There is one potter-God and the has fashioned everyone alike the is the light that pervades all creations<sup>29</sup>.

1. L. T. Hobhouse : *Morals in Evolution*, Henerry Holt and Company, New York, 1906 p.47.
2. Ibid., p. 210.
3. Watiz Verfassungsges Chichte, 49, cf. Hobhouse, p. 223.
4. Avtar Singh, op. cit., p.1.
5. James Hastings, *Encyclopaedica of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh) 7 & clerk & Co. 1955, Vol. 3 p.
6. Hoshiarpur District Gazetteer 1883-84 (Lahore).
7. H. M. Hocart "Infanticide", *Encyclopaedia of the Socail Sciences*, ed. E. R. A. Seligman & A. Johnson (New York: The Mcmillan Company, 1953), Vol. VII pp. 27, 28.
8. Ibid., p. 27.
9. R. C. Majumdar, (ed.) *British Parmountry and Indian Renais sance*

- (Bombay, Bharti Vidya Bhavan 1963) Part I, p. 822.
10. R. Fick, "Children, Hindu," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. ed. New York, James Hastings (Edinburch T. & Clear & Co., 1955. Vol. 3, p.547).
  11. Avtar Singh, op., cit., p. 171.
  12. Tod, J. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. I. p. 505.
  13. M. A. Macauliffe, op. civi, vo. 3. p. 71.
  15. Sikh Rahitmaryada, p. 32 IV.
  16. Ibid., p. 23, XI.
  17. Ibid., p. 37, XVI.
  18. Prehlad Singh, *Rahitnama*.
  19. Desa Singh, *Rahitnama*.
  20. R. C. Majumdar, op., cit., p.822.
  21. Law's of Manu 148. Cf. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton, University Press, 1957), p. 189.
  22. R. W. Frazer : *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* Edited by James Hastings, Vol. XI, T. and T Clark, 38, T&T Clark, New York Edinburgh, p.
  23. Ibid.,
  24. P. Jones, D. D. *India Its Life and Thought* (Race Books, New Delhi, 1971), p. 255.
  25. R. C. Majumdar, op., cit., p. 822. Refer also to his statement that this custom prevailed in India, China, Babylonia and many other countries and there are still some remote traces of it in *Harikiri*, or suicide of the devoted subjects with the death of the ruler in Japan.
  - 26.a. K. M. Munshi, *The History and Culture of the Indian people*, Ed. R. C. Majumdar (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, p. 378).
  26. b. From the Asiatic Researches, Vol. IV, On the Duties of a Faithful Hindu Widow, Published at Calcutta, 1795, p. 209.
  27. Ibid.
  28. Altekar, p.134. quoted by Jamila Verghese, *Her Gold and her body*, Vikas publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1980) p.45.

28. R. C. Majumdar, op., cit., p. 822.
29. Avtar Singh, op., cit., p. 180.
30. Max Arthur, Macauliffe, op. cit., Vol VI, p. 153.
31. Chaupa Soingh, *Rahitnama*.
32. Guruship from 1552-1575.
33. Guru Granth Sahib, *Suhi-Di-Var Guru Amar Das Sahib*, M-3, p. 787, quoted by Macauliff, Vol. II, p.229.
34. Forster's Travels, p. 309 Forster considers that Nanak prohibited *sati* and allowed widows to remarry, but Nanak did not make positive laws of the kind and perhaps self-sacrifice was not authoritatively enforced with until first Akbar and Jahangir and afterwards the English endeavoured to put and end to it.
35. Guru Granth Sahib *Sorth-di-var*, Macauliffe Vo. II., p. 225.
36. Duncan Greenless, *The Gospel of Guru Granth Sahib* (Adyar, The Theosophical Publishing House, 1975.) p. 9.
37. Guru Granth Sahib, pp. 338, translated into English verse by Dr. Gopal Singh Vol, I, pp. 327.
38. Manmohan Singh *Guru Granth Sahib*, Vol. I, Shiromani Gurdwara-Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar.
39. Guru Granth Sahib *Gauri Guareri* M. 5. pp. 185 translated by Dr. Gopal Singh, Vol., I, p. 176.

## **Conclusion**

The mankind consists of both woman and man. On the earth, they are almost equal in number. The fundamental unit of the society, namely family, can not exist without both of them. The growth of society is not possible without the presence of woman and man. Togetherness of woman and man is not necessary but also congenial for a fruitful development of social culture. The woman has a very important and central role in bringing about the growth of numbers in society. She undergoes great physical and mental hardship for her children. Her role is somewhat more difficult than man in many respects. It is however an irony of human institutions that although women have kept-pace with men in fulfilling their social role, yet they have lost their claim for equality with men somewhere in their journey on earth. A long history of their joint struggle with men has, however not entilted them to an equal, if not better, status with men in society. The actual status of woman is, perhaps, not the principal aim of this study. We have sought to examine the normative views of Sikhism in this regard. However, it is not possible to examine and evaluate the imperatives relating to an issue, such as the present one, without occassionally referring to the actual comparative situation.

I have undertaken research about the ethical equality of woman in Sikhism with in the above context. Sikhism is one of the recent religions and has strongly argued for treating men and women alike in respect of their ethical status. Guru Nanak Sahib is earliest, nearly the lone voice who spoke for the restoration of women to her lofty moral status. In contradistinction to the injunctions and

imperative which seem to exist at the time of Guru Nanak Sahib's teachings, we see an equal and more complimentary status claimed for women by the Guru. The ethical teachings of Sikhism have very significantly directed the attention of the human society to the injustice contained in the earlier imperatives against the women. The moral law, in this respect, stood tilted in the favour of the male component of the society. The Gurus sought to remove this tilt to restore the even balance of the moral law. I have sought to discover the Sikh imperatives along with their social impact in respect of the ethical equality of woman according to Sikhism.

The position and status of woman in a particular society is also one of the primary criteria to understand and analyse its culture. "Women constitute about half of the population and therefore there can not be happiness and full development so long as women remain depressed and exploited. No society can be free, fair and just until its women enjoy freedom and justice and opportunities for utilizing their full potential<sup>1</sup>."

A comparative study of status of women in different religions, attempted in an earlier part of this study gives us an understanding that the Sikh woman enjoys a higher position and equality in Sikh ethics in different from the other religious traditions. A Sikh woman enjoys a higher position and equality with man. The woman is treated as equal to man in matters of political, religious, social and moral activities. The moral person, according to the Gurus, is one who treats all in terms of equality. Sikhism has institutionalized this equality, between man and woman, through various practices. Guru Nanak Sahib says, "A true Yogi (perfect person) is one who looks upon all creation alike."<sup>2</sup>

We have undertaken the present thesis with a reference to the earlier religions. According to Hinduism in the Vedic period, woman enjoyed respect in society but in Upanishadic period, there appeared to be a withdrawal of the right to equality of woman.

Further in the Epic and Smriti period, the position of woman was not good; women were regarded as means of recreation and pleasure. The relatively inferior position of woman in Buddhist Era is clear from the status of nuns. The saints were against the entry of the woman in Sangh. Jainism gave some equality but condemned woman because of her sexual weakness. In Jainism, there is some faith and respect for woman as a mother. However, education of woman was limited to certain high families. The home was perhaps considered to be the important place for woman. As a result of all this, Jainism did not give proper respect to woman, in comparison of Sikh religion.

In Islam, women occupied a somewhat better but not entirely an equal position with men, in the social as well as religious activities. The woman, however had to be in veils. The property system was against the rights of woman and she was deprived of the right of equality. Muslim woman was not allowed to enter the mosque in the presence of men. In Arbian countries, the position of woman was somewhat lower than men, a woman was considered to be a property of her father and her husband. The early Christian society does not appear to treat her as an equal. In Western society, the social, cultural and religious status are attributed to woman in different ways. There are some prejudices also woman often become the victim of many whims and fancies the world over. During the medieval period, Christianity was in full control of philosophy, politics and religion. During this period too woman did not get a place of equality in the society. In Greek philosophy the position of woman was rather inferior. Plato and Aristotle were not in favour of the equality of woman with man. Among the early Christians it was generally believed that woman is the devil's gate and she destroys God's image in man.

Ethics is the science of values. In human equity, we have sought to discover for ourselves and present somewhat

systemetically the values relating to the equality of woman with men as explained by the Gurus.

We have discovered ethical equality of woman according to Sikh normative teachings. Woman and man are equal before God and they are equal in society. The gist of the balanced vision of such a one consist in this :

The female is *immanent* in the male,

The male is present in the female

To Brahm *gyani* is the mystery revealed<sup>1</sup>.

It was all because Sikh Gurus laid foundation to improve her conditon and gave equal status to woman with man in all spheres of life. The other factors responsible for her contribution are as under :

In the Second Chapter of this theis, we may refer to an interesting study of the role of woman in political and social sphere according to Sikhism. The ideal of social and political equality among woman and man is traced to the various imperatives in their teachings. The Sikhs are known for their enterprising spirit involving tough competitions and devotional attitude. It is this truth, in terms of courage, that these virtues find expression not only in the character of their males but also among the females. The political and social role of woman in the Guru period was of religious and social nature. It is notable that most of the prominent women came from the leading families of the day. Thus family background was also a dominating factor. Women in the Guru period, who occupy a conspicuous place in Sikhism, belonged largely to the families of Sikh Gurus. Some of these women were either mothers or daughters or wives or sisters of the Gurus. Therefore, at several times situation called upon them to discharge duties that they were capable of. Their historiographic records are available because they were the kins-women of the Gurus, women other than the Guru's families like Mai Bhago etc. are an exception.

These women assisted the Gurus in ameliorating the condition

of the people and served them in whatever ways it was possible. The women in the later period displayed their intelligence, valour and courage in the political sphere and in social field. The circumstances and atmosphere around them were such that they plunged themselves into activity and contributed their share. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed very active political participation of women. They were either called upon to act as Regents or Administrators of the state affairs directly or indirectly, when the ruler was incapable of performing his task with due ability. They proved their abilities to such an extent that they often surpassed the ruling men in intellect and bravery. In this period, all women dealt with in this thesis, are from the ruling families. The courage and political ability is a virtue of women. Example of woman like Harsaran Kaur are rare to find. We known the virtues of woman's courage and determination in general. Sikh women had fought for their community, faith, country and honour. There were a large number of women displaying manly courage and strength.

After going through the virtuous achievement of some of the leading women, it can safely be inferred that social evils and inhibitions neither affected their moral position nor hampered these illustrious women in doing spectacular deeds.

The third chapter of this study deals with the Sikh injunctions regarding infanticide, *sati* and brideburning and other practices then practised then prevalent in the society. The Sikh ethics recognised the right to life of everyone, regardless of the sex of the person. Guru Nanak Sahib fought against the blind dogmas and traditional beliefs including female infanticide. In Sikhism, the woman has a right to life like a man. Many ethical injunctions favour this right of woman. The Sikh Gurus have laid down that no body will kill his daughter as both man and woman have equal right to live. In Sikhism, person indulging in infanticide are to be excommunicated from Sikhism permanently and those having any

social relations with them are termed punishable. *Sati* is another evil practice relating to the right to life. It emancipates the society from the belief that woman has no independent existence away from man. *Sati* was a custom instituted by man, enforced by religious rewards and penalties, with a view to reveal the woman as the object and subject of her husband's will. The practice of *sati* was a ritual prevalent at the time of the emergence of Sikhism. We find a reference to the *Sati*, in the Guru Granth Sahib. In one *Rahitnama*, we find a reference to *sati* as a custom rejected in Sikhism. Guru Amar Das Sahib strongly rejected it in *Guru Granth Sahib*. Bhagat Kabir also rejected the practice of *sati*. The housewife's conduct in personal and social context ought to be in terms of the ethical and social values and not in terms of self immolation."

Guru Nanak Sahib bestowed on woman full equality in religious and social life. He regarded man and woman as the offsprings of God. Guru Nanak Sahib's idea of woman's equality with man in that age of darkness was a revolutionary idea, Brahmins forced woman to observe extravagant customs and thus she was being exploited by priestly class. Woman was not allowed to wear sacred thread and read religious scriptures, but was compelled to perform *sati* after the death of her husband. Gurus condemned this evil.

Guru Nanak Sahib stressed and advocated the equality and freedom of woman in society. In the present age the practice of bride burning is very common. This evil has come up due to dowry. Dowry is root cause for this inhuman practice. In Guru Granth Sahib, the material dowry was strongly condemned. It favoured the spiritual dowry instead: "O my father gift away to me the dowry of the Lord's name."

Lust for wealth, makes a man greedy. They are called *Manmukh* by Guru Nanak Sahib. Sikhism stressed on '*Kirat Karo, Nam Japo, Vand Chhako*'. It may be regarded as 'Earn honestly and live sharing what you earn by the sweat of your's brow. The word *Ghal*

as explained by Bhai Gurdas, stands for hardworking. In this chapter we explained the three economic theories which have been given by Sikh Gurus. From this, it is clear that ideal man is hard working and he has no lust for wealth. He is called *Gurmukh*. The *Gurmukh* is not in favour of taking or giving dowry or begging. In this way Guru's tried to modify the economic behaviour of man by the ethical commandments.

Our discussion so far has pointed to one fact that we ought to voluntarily break down the practices of evil customs and norms which are prevailing in the society. In this lies the freedom and equality of woman with man. We had made the observation that Sikh ethics follows great humanitarian traditions in focussing the attention on evils and their substitution by virtues.

The fourth and final chapter deals with the concept of social service by woman according to Sikhism. There is no distinction between man and woman. All are equal in the eyes of the Gurus. We have reiterated many a time in the present chapter, that various types of social services reduces the glow of the ego from the human mind. It is stated by Professor Pram Nath that mental health implies "cultural and emotional maturity. It means the rounding the one's ego and liquidating one's selfishness to be able to live at peace with one's own self as well as with others". Thus we see that Sikh ethics is based on the way of *Martha* as in Christianity. They give more emphasis on the need for being encumbered about much serving<sup>2</sup>.

In this chapter we have also explained the various types of social service which are performed by Sikh woman in religious institutions, serving food in the community kitchen, serving water, cooking etc. Service of the Guru and service of God, as also to organised help for the needy is considered to be moral duty.

Now the question arises, what about the status of woman in society and morals ? Here it may be submitted that, as we have seen in the preceding analysis, the prominent characteristic of the social

ethics of the Sikhs, which has appeared in bold relief, is in terms of universalism and equality of woman and man as expressed in the practical, social and religious institutions.

Guru Nanak has proclaimed, "Every one is high, no one seems low to me".

Sikhism fulfills the requirement of this acid test by a complete rejection of the unequal ethical distinction between man and woman and promulgates the equality of all.

1. Krishna Iyer, *Human Rights and the Law*, p. 31. quoted by R. K. Sapru, *Women and Development*, Ashish publishing House, New Delhi, 1989, p. 13.
2. Guru Granth Sahib, Suhi M. 1 (2-1-8), p.730.
3. Guru Granth Sahib, Ramkali, G. N. Quoted by Wazir Singh, *Philosophy of Sikh Religion* (Ess Ess Publications, 1981), p. 64.
1. Prem Nath, *The Basis of Education*, A philosophical and Sociological Approach, (Delhi : S Chand & Con, 1957), p. 83.
2. Dr. Avtar Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 100.
3. Guru Granth Sahib, Sri Ragm M. 1 (6-14), p. 62.

## **Woman's Role in Social Service According to Sikhism**

Family role of woman in family has generally been considered to that of a person rendering service to the family members. She has been the traditional hub around which the household have been generally orgniazed. The sevice of comfort for others in the household have generally been the duties of the woman family members.

The woman's role in organizing and executing the institutional social services has been generally very limited. Apart from the fact that the traditional social organization in India did not leave much scope for the social service at large, wherever its scope existed, it was limited to be a male function in general. In 15th century, the Sikh Gurus, in their efforts to organize family and social system preached dynamic and more extended role for woman in discharging many new functions which were not earlier considered to be her duties. This extended the role of woman in the field of social service

**It can be seen from the following angles:**

- 1. Women's role in religous institutions.**
- 2. Women's role in social welfare rehabilitation, education, economic activites, charity services, health care, cleanliness and diet, public administration, mother's contribution to personality development of family members.**

Before we turn to detailed study of the woman's role in social service according to Sikhism. It is necessary to know; what is the term social services (*sewa*) in Sikh Ethics. Sikhism stresses the need to practise some of the basic virtues in life. According to Guru Nanak, "Devotion without virtues is impossible<sup>1</sup>." We find that

Sikhism has laid down great stress on social service, wisdom, truthfulness, temperance, justice, courage, humility, chastity, charity and contentment, as traits of an ideal conduct. These virtues should be practised by all.

In this regard, social service occupies a central place in the scheme of social ethics of the Sikhs. Bhai Gurdas says, "Sacrifice I am unto that person who sacrifices for others. Sacrifice I am unto one who is happy by serving others<sup>2</sup>."

A famous scholar said that, "social service ought to be rendered in many or all respects. It may be in providing the material requisite, or by rendering physical service, or it may be by comforting the spiritual aspect of others by reading out Scriptures to him<sup>3</sup>." Bhai Gurdas says, "material, physical service, like providing food or giving rest to the bodies of others, or reading out the Scriptures for their solace, is by far superior to the countless sacrificial fires and performances of ceremonies or mere meditation and wordly knowledge<sup>4</sup>." According to him, "the service of others is enjoined by the Gurus<sup>5</sup>."

"Service, according to Guru Gobind Singh, ought to be more of the oppressed and the needy so that they may be uplifted and brought on the same equal level." He says, "True service is the service of these (common) people; I am not inclined to serve others of higher castes; charity will bear fruit, in this end the next world if given to such worthy people as these<sup>6</sup>."

In *Guru Granth Sahib* word used *sewa*, literally means service but in Guru's usage it has a much wider devotional connotation. Social service in ethical terms as Sikh way of realization, we take the term to mean both the service of mankind and devotion to God. According to *Guru Granth Sahib*:

"Avadin Sahib Seviaiant Chhadie so<sup>7</sup>."

"Guru Ki Seva Sabad Vichar<sup>8</sup>."

"Sevak Ki Orak Nibahi Prit<sup>9</sup>."

Guru Nanak Sahib is of the view that “one of the most important effects of devotion and contemplation lies in the attitude of the person towards social service<sup>10</sup>.” Guru Nanak Sahib says, “When one dwells on the (Guru's) Word, one's mind flows out to serve the others and one practices contemplation and self control by overcoming ego<sup>11</sup>. ”

In this respect if ego is strong, we cannot serve any one, but serve ourselves. So the greater the ego the greater is the need of its anti-dote, service. Due to service, everything will be improved and purified. If our ego is erratic and arrogant let it be yoked in services, it will be tamed and trained. There are many kinds of serving, like one's own Kith and Kin, which do not take us beyond the pale of the ego. Guru Nanak Sahib says:

“The service of God is done by the  
men of temperate lives who meditate  
on Him as the truest of the true<sup>12</sup>. ”

Guru Nanak Sahib teaches that he, who wishes to be acceptable to the Creator, should make service of fellow-beings as the ideal of his life. The spirit of service alone answers devotion to one's work and brings peace and contentment in utter disregard of material gains. This is very clearly expressed in Guru Granth Sahib.

Such a one becomes incorruptible, Maya  
fails to take him in;  
He is inmulerable to dagger  
As lives according to the Eternal  
laws only the greedy succumb to Maya.  
How can the lamp burn without oil ?  
Act according to the Scriptures.  
Let thy lamp have the wick of fear of the Lord.  
Let the understanding of Truth kindle it;  
This is the oil and thus the lamp burns.  
Make this light, thou shalt have the

vision of the Lord.

When the word influences the mind (then) one  
devotes oneself to service which brings comfort.

The wordly possessions come and go

Service in the world reserves a seat in the Lord's Court<sup>13</sup>.

In a similar spirit Guru Arjan Sahib places the service of humanity immediately prior to the loving prayer. The favourite idiom he uses is, "Servant of the Servants<sup>14</sup>." A person, who has not fulfilled his social loyalties and moral obligations involved in social service, is far removed from any spiritual realization. It is one thing he cannot do without. The prayer is to be preached by the discharge of social obligations in terms of the help of others<sup>15</sup>.

In this regard, the Gurus have mentioned some pre-requisites of service (*sewa*) without results. Service, as has been recommended by the Guru should be free from any expectation of a reward<sup>16</sup>. It should be free from desire (*Nihkama*). A self-centred or conceited person cannot be expected to do social service. Service demands self-sacrifice. It can be performed only if the heart is free from egoism (*Haumai*)<sup>17</sup>. Complete surrender<sup>18</sup> to the Will of God is another requisite of service. It should be voluntary or self-imposed and sincere. Service done under compulsion can not be of much good<sup>19</sup>.

The Sikh ethical doctrine in regard to social service lays great emphasis on the practice of the ideal of equality. In pursuit of the ideal of service, the Sikh is not to make any discrimination on the grounds of Sex, Caste, Creed or Color. For that reason, Sikh ethics stresses the equality between the man and woman as the fundamental fact of oneness of all human being. We can find these injunctions from the following utterance of Guru Amar Das Sahib "In this world there is one 'male' (here stands for God), all the rest are females." The refrain of the Sikh hymn referring to woman is of a spiritual nature. It would appear that the word 'woman' in them

mostly stands for the human soul and the word 'Husband' for God<sup>20</sup>." Attempts have been made to show that the man and woman have same soul and it is feminine in both. Man and woman, as biological entilties, have no spiritual meaning for Sikhism. The task before both is to perform socail service for God-realization.

Although Guru Nanak does not give a comprehensive list of human rights, we may infer a few of them from a careful study of his life and teachings. One of the important rights, which is central to the Guru's social philosophy, refers to the freedom of the individual<sup>21</sup>. Woman's freedom is a necessary factor in the development of any culture.

Guru Nanak's rejection of social differences was further complimented by his affirmation of equality for woman and his concept of society was free from taboos and prejudices born out of sex. In fact, in his own, as a staunch advocate of woman's proper place in society. He bestowed to woman, freedom of thought, education, worship and right to participation in social and religous life of the society. He said there could be no disparity between man and woman. Both were equally important for the smooth running of the vehicle of life.

In this way, all men and women are equal in Sikhism and both have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body, the same build, composed of mixture of earth, air, fire and water. From this it is clear that all the services which are mentioned in Sikhiṣm, both genders equally can performe.

Woman's role in religious institution is very the same as the role of social service of man in Gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship). "The tenet of social service was given a concrete form and the Gurdwaras were required to be the socail service centres apart from their role of imparting spiritual institution<sup>22</sup>.

It is declared by yet another compiler, "An institution is indeed regarded as a social value since it regulates some relationship

between the individuals and development in them<sup>22</sup>.” “The emerging Sikh institutions were based on the ethical doctrines of the Sikh Guru's and had the theistic Waltanschaung<sup>23</sup>.”

Social service in Gurdwaras render without any discrimination of gender. Sikh women read the Scriptures and participate in Akhand Paths. Women do Kirtan, (singing of hymns from Guru Granth Sahib). The result is that woman has gained moral courage and sincere devotion.

In Sikhism, we find that great importance is attached to the service of the Guru. The service of the Guru is said to yield spiritual realization<sup>24</sup>.” The service of the Guru may be inspired from a sense of gratitude because it is through his teachings that all doubts of the mind are overcome and the way is cleared for the attainment of the Ideal<sup>25</sup>.”

In this regard, Sikh women are held in very high esteem, and they perform all duties for Guru. “it may be pointed out here that no particular living Guru after Guru Gobind Singh Sahib is acknowledged in Sikhism. It is, however, held that the Sat Guru's Sabad (True Guru's word) is the soul of the Guru and the holy congregation is the body of the Guru, whose service then can be called the service of the Guru<sup>26</sup>.

If we want to serve God we have to meditate on Him and continually remember Him. Only a person with a heart full of devotion and love for God can serve mankind. Guru Arjan Sahib says, “God is intertwined with the servant like the warp and woof. He sustains his servants and gives them peace. I bring water for his servants, fan them and give their corn, for this also is the service of God<sup>27</sup>.” In existentialist ethics, like Gabriel Marcel, Jaspers also affirms that “the love of one's fellow-men corresponds with the approach to Transcendence (God) itself, “and further that “perfection in human existence is measured by the accessibility of man to God and to his fellow men<sup>28</sup>.”

As a role of Service for God realization, the Guru made no distinction between the male and female initiation, instruction or participation in religious congregation. Sikh Gurus asserted that woman as well as man equally shared the grace of God and were responsible for their deeds before God.

In Sikhism, Guru endeavoured to remove the pitiable or miserable condition of the women. Gurus ordained that women sit side by side with men in religious gatherings and enjoy equal status.

In this regard, Guru Nanak Sahib invited all the women of the world to join prayer. Thus woman deserved respect equal with man. Guru invested them with office of preachership. She began to take part in religious Kirtan and missionary work<sup>29</sup>. Out of the 22 Manjis (Seats of Spiritual initiation and discourse) established by Guru Amar Das Sahib the for preaching of Sikhism, two were held by women, And out of the 146 missionaries appointed by him, 52 were women<sup>30</sup>.

Then we have *Sangat* and *Pangat*. *Sangat* is the congregation, where, under Sat Guru's blessing, we join each other. *Pangat* means seating order at the community kitchen. There we learn the first lesson in service (sewa) when we look after the shoes of the *Sangat* and offer them cold drinks, prepare the stage and the meeting place, and for the *Pangat* clean the dishes, serve food and water to those, who join, irrespective of social status, caste or creed, of any other factor. Feeding the hungry free of cost is an integral function of Sikh religious centres. This service is called *langer*. In short, this service is done by women in Gurdwaras without any distinction. Sikhs are enjoined to have enough to distribute. Guru's commands are very clear in this respect.

"Eat, spend, but share.

It will not exhaust but ever expand<sup>31</sup>.

The Sikh ethical doctrine in regard to *Sangat* and *Pangat* was of a practical importance. These virtues are practised by all women.

The value of the *Sangat* and *Pangat* is to bring people together in all the human spiritual oneness and to sublimate their personal ego for the service of mankind.

In this regard the money collected by Mata Sahib Kaur and Mata Sunder Kaur was to be spent for running the community kitchen. Bhai Gurdas also says, ‘The Sikhs should serve one only by serving others, one can attain happiness, one should cultivate selfless devotion and share one's food with others<sup>32</sup>.’

Community kitchen thus grew into an institution where lessons in social service and practical ethics were given and practised.

In a similar manner the *daswandh* (one tenth of one's income) is required to be the voluntary contribution by every Sikh towards the. The *daswandh* services is of dual purpose: of organising help for needy as well as for providing the opportunity to the members to participate in the organised social service and thus weld them together in closer ties<sup>33</sup>.

Any culture which does not guard the equality between the man and woman is at a lower level of development and tends to disappear in the long run. For this, education of woman plays an important role in every culture of every society. A sociologist, Stefan Nowak, says “It would be reasonable to expect that the assessment of one's position in society with education<sup>34</sup>. ” Another formulary also said that, “Social changes are common to every society and, a change in the status of a community brings a corresponding change in the status of its women and vice versa<sup>35</sup>. ”

Absence of education for women led to all the more deterioration in their status. There were quite a few superstitions which hampered the progress of female education. The people believed that intrigues were facilitated by imparting literacy to women. A few girls from rich families were imparted elementary education. The census reports of 1881 admitted that “the exact number of women who could read or write was not available. An ability to read and write

was not considered a sign of respectability<sup>36</sup>. However, "Guru Nanak Sahib had declared that women should be offered educational facilities to learn language, literature, religious Scripture and music. It brought rapid social change and eased transition. When they become mothers, they have more profound effect on the desire and aptitude of their children<sup>37</sup>.

Guru Nanak Sahib used the term *vidya* for knowledge of learning and science. For Guru Nanak, education is an important input for the solution of the different social, personal and domestic problems and helps to attain spiritual knowledge. It removes ignorance and shows the path of Truth.

Guru Nanak Sahib has expressed his views on the various aspects of education, his words we will come across many a references in his hymns to the real meaning of education, the role of education in human life, the role of teacher, the content of education, education and religion, value of discipline in life and the importance of education.

In this regard a scholar has said that earlier, education was imparted on the basis of class, colour, creed and sex. In Sikhism however, Guru Sahib said that education should be universal and for all types of people without any kind of prejudices.

In this way Guru Nanak Sahib rejected the practice of the earlier 'four Ashramas' and the heterodox monastic orders<sup>38</sup>. Sikh Gurus' contribution too was three fold. Firstly Education, both religious and ethical in character, was provided in the religious centres. Secondly, the mother tongue of the people was an important medium of instruction. Thirdly, the chief aim of enlightening the minds of the people was to be achieved in two ways: by instructing the adults through sermons and discussions and by giving education to children right from infancy.

Sikh ethics found the highest good in spiritual perfection. For which men and women's development and life of action is also

necessary. Sikh ethics has laid stress on values of life which are means or way to perfection.

In the eyes of Guru Nanak Sahib, education is an essential means for the enlightenment of mind and soul. It is *Avidya* or ignorance which flatters the mind. Education enlightens the mind with the light of knowledge. As with the appearance of the Sun, the darkness disappears, so with the attainment of knowledge, ignorance is dispelled<sup>39</sup>. Just as darkness disappears when the lamp is lightened, similarly through the study of the books of wisdom, ignorance of our mind is removed. It becomes pure and wholesome and does not get polluted again<sup>40</sup>. The lamp of wisdom burns steadily when it is fed by the oil of the essence of knowlege<sup>41</sup>.

In this regard Guru Nanak Sahib has laid stress on spiritual upliftment of man for this purpose. He has emphasised on moral development of man. For him, truthful living is higher than truth itself. The pursuit of virtues eliminates all evils and vices. Guru Nanak Sahib asked men to replace all the chains of vices with virtues, because virtues are our only friend<sup>42</sup>.

In this way, Sikh philosophy expressed Gurus' view of education for social, spiritual and moral upliftment of both men and women on equal footing. Even in the modern materialistic world, which is fast heading towards industrialisation and where there is a crisis of moral values, there is great need for education for the development of the individual.

**Women are nearly half of the human society and entitled to share secular and spiritual knowledge on equal basis with men.**

Bhai Gurdas says, "As the ocean is greater than the pond and the river. The sumer mountain is known for its greatness among of the mountains. As the knowlegde and the contemplation of the Guru is the best among all kinds of knowledge and the contemplations of the pay people. In the same way the householder's life is better than the ways of the ascetic renunciation<sup>43</sup>.

The Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya was the first premier institution in Northern India which started imparting education to women who later achieved eminence in the high positions such as Doctors, Professors, Scientists and Administrators in education department. It was also a good model of the social service in the Sikh tradition<sup>44</sup>.

Both social status and educational level are obviously related to occupational status which is attained by women in society. Thus, the possession of a job or occupation, whether ascribed or achieved, become the basis of status in the society. For this economic independence of woman was also mainly responsible for social status of woman.

In this way, because of equality between man and woman's rights, many Sikh women who excelled as administrators, warriors, reformers and religious teachers besides being noble mothers of great men. Most of the Sikh women whose works are admired in social service as well as politics have been mentioned in the second chapter. These women have served the mankind with their great ability.

The values of spirit underlying the service of the others is also to overcome the discriminatory attitude which characterises the state of bondage. Service through *dan* and benevolence is generally described to be the most required virtue in the present age. The Sikh woman also collect the money for *Langar* (community kitchen) and other purposes for the benefit of the mankind.

The role of woman in the house also deserves attention. An ideal woman can be a good wife, a good mother or a good sister who sacrifices herself for the good of her family. As the Gurus have advised the Sikhs to live the life of a householder. Sikh woman have a special role to play in the family by performing her duties towards her children also. Apart from rearing them, she also teaches them the moral ideals and virtues. An ideal wife is a companion of her husband in weal and woe and proves helpful to him in the better

discharge of her household and social duties and responsibilities.

Here, we have seen that in Sikhism every woman enjoys religious freedom. The Sikh ethics given equal rights to woman as well as to man. Woman without any restriction attends the Gurdwara congregation, performs kirtan, and cooks the food.

Here, it may be submitted, that as we have seen in the preceding statements, prominent characteristic of the social ethics of the Sikhs, which has appeared in bold belief, is in terms of universalism and equality<sup>45</sup> between the women and men, in political and social institutions. Guru Nanak Sahib proclaimed, "Every one is high, not one seems low to me, for the same potter has made all vessels"<sup>46</sup>. There is then no moral truth in the principle of inequality in all. Bhai Gurdas says, "Gursikh once seized by the thought of social service continues it till the end of his life"<sup>47</sup>."

The services which people perform in Gurdwaras, seem to be an expression of this attitude. It is also interesting to note that when a Sikh commits a wrong or violates a command and seeks its expiation, the punishment is also almost invariably in the form of community service at the Gurudwara<sup>48</sup>.

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2. Bhai Gurdas, *Vars Stanza 5*, Var 12.
3. Avtar Singh, Op.Cit., p.194.
4. Bhai Gurdas, Stanza, 19, Var 14 ("Gian dhyan lokh jog sabad suhavani...")
5. *Ibid.*, Stanza 17, Var 14.
6. Guru Gobind Singh, *Sabad Hazare* (UNESCO) 15 : 175
7. *Guru Granth Sahib*, p.60
8. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 1000
10. Dr. Avtar Singh, Op. Cit., p.195.
11. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Paabhati M. 1 (7-2), p. 1343
12. Asa-di-Var, VII.
13. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Sri Rag 33 p. Quoted by Chief Khalsa Diwan, *The Sikhs Their Philosophy and Faith*, Amritsar.
14. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Gaudi M. 5 (1-4-121), pp. 204. *Seva Karis das dasan ke anek bhant tis kari*. See also Ibid, Bilawal M. 5 (1-4-44), pp.811.
15. Dr. Avtar Singh, Op. Cit., p.195.
16. *Seva Karat Hoi Nihkam Tis Kou Hot Parapatii Suami*. Quoted by Darshan Singh, in journal of Sikh Studies, Vol. V No. 1, Feb., 1978.
17. *Vich Haunai Seva Thapi n Pae*. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
18. *Ais Sewak Seva karai Tis ka Jiu Tis Agai Dharai*, *Ibid.*, p.95.
19. *Badha Chati jo bhare na gun na upkar* *Ibid.*, p.95.
20. Nirmal Kumar Jain, *Sikh Religion and Philosophy*, (Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, 1979)
21. Harbans Singh, Op. Cit., p. 324.
22. Avtar Singh, Op. Cit., p. 195.
23. A. C. Das, *An Introduction of the Study of Society*, p. 35, Quoted by Dr. Balbir Singh Dhillon, *Sikhism Origin and Development* (Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New delhi, 1988), p. 191
24. Dalbir Singh., *Studies in the Background of the Rise of Sikhism* (Unpublised Thesis submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1976), p.8
25. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Gaudi Porbi, M. 5 (3-15-153), p. 213.
26. *Ibid.*, Asavari M. 5 (1-2-158), p. 409
27. Avtar Singh, Op. Cit., p. 198.
28. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Majh M. 5 (1-2-18-25) p. 101.
29. George F. Kneller, *Existentialism and Education* (New York Philosophical Libaray Inc., 1958), p.94. Quoted by Avtar Singh, Op. Cit., p. 198.
30. Dr. Ajit Singh, Op. Cit., p. 129.
31. *Sikh Review*, March 1988, p. 38.

32. *Sikh Review*, November 1972, p. 43
33. Bhai Gurdas Varan, Var 20, pauri 10.
34. Avtar Singh, Op. Cit., p. 195.
35. Stefan Nowak, *Structured Social Inequality* (Heller Celia, (edn) Macmillan Co., New York, 1969), p. 236.
36. H. R. Trivedi, *Scheduled Caste Women*, Concept Publishing Company, Delhi 1976), p.23.
37. Census for India, 1881 Vol. I, p. 254
38. Ajit Singh Sikka, Op. Cit., p. 130.
39. Ajit Singh Sikka, Op. Cit., p. 102.
40. *Guru Granth Sahib*, M. 1, Suhi, p. 791. *Ugavai guru na japai chandu jah gian pragasu agianu mitantu.*
41. *Ibid.*, M. 1, Tukhari, p. 1109. *dipku sahaji balai tati jalaia*
42. *Ibid.*, M. 1, Maru, p. 992 *Gian ratani Manu manjiai bahuri no maila hoe.*
43. *Guru Granth Sahib*, M. 1, Sorath, p. 595. *Nanak avgun jetare tete goli janjir je gun honinta.*
44. Bishan Singh (trans) *Kabit Swayya Stik Bhai Gurdas* (Amritsar: Bhai Jawahar Singh Kirpal Singh of Company, 1911), pp. 213-232.
45. *Sikh Review*, May 1989, p. 52.
46. Avtar Singh, Op. Cit., p. 201
47. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Sri Rag M. 1 (6-14), p. 62 Quoted by Dr. Avtar Singh, Op. Cit., p. 201.
48. Bhai Gurdas Vars, Stanza 20, Var 14.
49. Clerence O McMullen, *Religious Belief and Practices of the Sikhs in Rural Punjab*, Ramesh Jain, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1989.

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# ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਨਵੀਆਂ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨਾਵਾਂ

- \* ਮੇਰੀ ਯਾਦ ਲੇਖਕ : ਮਾਸਟਰ ਤਾਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ
  - \* ਪਿਰਮ ਪਿਆਲਾ ਲੇਖਕ : ਮਾਸਟਰ ਤਾਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ
  - \* ਬਾਬਾ ਤੇਗਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਲੇਖਕ : ਮਾਸਟਰ ਤਾਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ
  - \* ਕਿਉਂ ਵਰਨੀ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਜਾਣਾ ਲੇਖਕ : ਮਾਸਟਰ ਤਾਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ
  - \* ਮਾਸਟਰ ਤਾਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਲੇਖ (੨ ਭਾਗ) ਲੇਖਕ : ਮਾਸਟਰ ਤਾਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ
  - \* ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀ ਜੀਵਨ (ਲੇਖਕ : ਸ. ਸਮਝੇਰ ਸਿੰਘ)
  - \* ਸਿੱਖ ਡੇਬ (ਲੇਖਕ : ਡਾ. ਗੁਰਬਖਸ਼ ਸਿੰਘ)
  - \* ਰੱਬੀ ਰਿਸ਼ਮਾ (ਲੇਖਕ : ਪਿੰਸੀਪਲ ਰਾਮ ਸਿੰਘ)
  - \* ਅਕਾਲੀ ਮੌਰਚੇ ਤੇ ਝੱਬਰ (ਸੰਪਾਦਕ : ਸ. ਨਰੈਣ ਸਿੰਘ)
  - \* ਹਰਿਗੰਦਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਾ ਸੁਨਹਿਰੀ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ (ਲੇਖਕ ਸ. ਕਿਰਪਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ)
  - \* ਗੁਰਬਿਲਾਸ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਡੇਵੀ (ਸੰਪਾਦਕ : ਗਿ. ਜੋਗੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਵੇਦਾਂਤੀ ਤੇ ਪਿੰਸੀਪਲ ਅਮਰਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ)

\* ਸਿੱਖ, ਸਿੱਖੀ ਤੇ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ

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(ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਤੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ)

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## ਸਿੱਖ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਰੀਸਰਚ ਬੈਰਡ ਦੀਆਂ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨਾਵਾਂ

- \* ਪ੍ਰਾਚੀਨ ਪੰਥ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਲੇਖਕ : ਸ. ਰਤਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਭੈਗੂ
  - \* ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਸਿਫਤੀ ਦਾ ਘਰ ਲੇਖਕ : ਗਿ: ਜੰਗ ਸਿੰਘ
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  - \* ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦਾ ਪੰਜਾਹ ਸਾਲਾ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਲੇਖਕ : ਸ. ਸ਼ਮਸ਼ੇਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਸ਼ੋਕ
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  - \* ਸ. ਕਰਮ ਸਿੰਘ ਹਿਸਟੋਰੀਅਨ ਦੀ ਖੇਜ਼ (ਤਿੰਨ ਹਿੱਸੇ)
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  - \* ੧੯੫੫ ਦਾ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਸੂਬਾ ਮੌਰਚਾ (ਤਸਵੀਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ) ਲੇਖਕ : ਡਾ. ਹਰਜਿੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਦਿਲਗੀਰ

ఆంగారెణ్ణి విడుషా

- \* Stuggle for Freedom of Religious Worship in Jaito *Principal Teja Singh*
  - \* God in Sikhism *Dr. Rajinder Kaur*
  - \* Gurdwara Reform Movement *Principal Teja Singh*
  - \* Status of Women in Sikhism *Ms. Bhupinder Kaur*

ਹਿੰਦੀ ਵਿਡਾਏ

- ★ विजय विनोद  
डा. देवेन्द्र सिंघ विद्यार्थी